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ABSTRACT

The report presents findings from a study into the causes for modern language enrollment decline in Scotland's high schools. Data were drawn from teacher, students, and administrator interviews in 12 school studies and a survey of modern language teachers and a sample of students from 100 schools taking standardized modern language exams. Results indicate a major increase, over 20 years, in language enrollments at S4 level, but a major decline in enrollments at High Grade level, both in absolute terms, and relative to other subjects. Two factors unique to Scotland are identified: limited exposure to foreign languages outside school, and lack of shared motivation within Scottish society. Perceptions of public policy on modern language education was found to have little effect on enrollment. Students are more critical of the language curriculum than of teaching methods, resources, class size, or ability grouping. Learners did not find second language learning intrinsically motivating, needed more support for their interest in other languages and cultures, saw few short-term benefits in language learning, and lacked clear expectations of language study. Recommendations are made for changes in the structure of the modern language program, in course content, teaching methods, resources, recruitment, and in promotion of lifelong language learning. (MSE)

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The Scottish Council for Research in Education

Foreign Languages in the Upper Secondary School

A Study of the Causes of Decline

Joanna McPake, Richard Johnstone
Lesley Low, Lindsay Lyall

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Joanna McPake, Richard Johnstone
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SCRE
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Innovation and Excellence

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In acknowledging the major contributions of those indicated above, we should also of course emphasise that we ourselves accept responsibility for the content the report, including any faults and failings it may have.

It is widely recognised that Modern Languages have been going through a difficult period, especially in the upper secondary school. We hope that our report, drawing as it does on the substantial interest and support that we have mentioned, will help readers make a well-informed assessment of the past and the present in order to think constructively about the future.

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Executive Summary

This report presents and discusses findings from a study carried out by a team of researchers from the Scottish Council for Research in Education and Stirling University into the causes of the decline in uptake of modern languages at Higher Grade level in Scottish secondary schools.

The research was based on preliminary interviews with teachers of modern languages, students, guidance staff and members of senior management teams in 12 'case study' schools and a survey of the views of principal teachers of modern languages, headteachers and a 25% sample of all S4 and S5 students who were taking or had taken Standard Grade exams in modern languages at Credit Level, in 100 secondary schools. Preliminary interviews were carried out in the spring and summer terms 1997 and the survey early in 1998.

This summary describes the principal findings from the research.

1 Evidence of the decline

1.1 There has been a major increase over the past twenty years in uptake of modern languages at Standard Grade in S4.

1.2 There has been a major decline over the same period in uptake of modern languages at Higher, both in absolute terms and also relative to other subjects. An exception is Spanish at Higher in S5 where the numbers rise. The decline strongly affects both male and female students, though males more so. It is possible, though, that the downwards curve may very recently have levelled off.

1.3 The above two points taken together indicate the massive gap that has opened up between presentations in modern languages at Standard Grade in S4 and presentations at Higher, regardless of whether this is Higher in S5, S6 or subsequently.

1.4 The decline at Higher is more substantial in French than in the other Languages. French, though, remains by far the dominant modern language. German and Spanish have gained some ground during the period in question but do not challenge French's position.

1.5 Performance in national examinations, according to SEB reports, is generally satisfactory or highly satisfactory in the communication domains of Speaking, Listening and Reading, but examiners voice concerns in respect of Writing (at Standard Grade), and accurate command of modern language grammar and accuracy of written expression in English at Higher.

1.6 At Standard Grade, the proportion of students gaining high or fairly high grades in modern languages is lower than for English at Standard Grade, with particularly low percentages gaining Grades 1 and 2 in Writing (from a cohort moreover that is selected for ability). They are markedly less high than for other subjects such as Biology and Chemistry.

1.7 At Higher, on the other hand, the proportion of candidates scoring A or B in modern languages is in line with most other subjects and, in fact, above those for English. This suggests there may be a problem at Standard Grade

where the comparative difficulty of obtaining a high grade, particularly in Writing, may conceivably act as a disincentive to continuation for Higher. Those who do proceed to Higher, however, generally do comparatively well.

2 Review of previous research

2.1 Previous research in Scotland and elsewhere suggests that there are two key characteristics of the Scottish context for learning and using a modern language: the limited amount of exposure that students receive to that language out of school and the lack of a shared motivation within our society. In these two aspects, Scotland is different from many countries elsewhere in Europe.

2.2 This research also points to a wide range of specific factors rather than to a smaller number of more general factors which may be having a negative influence on modern languages teaching at school.

2.3 International research has established two social-psychological constructs that have been widely adopted as language-related attitudes and motivations: integrativeness and instrumentality.

2.4 More recent work in an international context has focused much more on learner characteristics within the classroom context, identifying factors such as 'expectancy and value', 'attributions', 'self-efficacy, self-esteem, self-worth, self-confidence' and 'goal setting and perseverance' as being potentially relevant to language related research on attitudes and motivation.

2.5 As a result of the review of earlier work, the researchers developed a 3-level framework for the investigation, deriving in part from the conventional and more recent research: the language level, the learning situation level and the learner level.

2.6 The researchers also identified a number of difficulties to be confronted when investigating attitudes and motivation.

3 Findings relating to perceptions of the impact of national policies on language learning

3.1 At the outset of the research it was hypothesised that the effects of various new initiatives and changes in policy relating to modern languages would have had direct and indirect effects on the uptake of modern languages at Higher. Aspects of the policy context thought most likely to have a negative impact on uptake were *Languages for All*, and learners' experiences of Standard Grade and of progression from Standard Grade to Higher.

3.2 Our data show, however, that while principal teachers believe these factors to have had a negative impact, and that headteachers support principal teachers' views to some extent, parents and students were less aware of or concerned about the effects of *Languages for All*, the Standard Grade examination or the relationship between Standard Grade and Higher.

3.3 To some extent, these differences may be attributed to differences of perspective. Teachers are in a better position to see long-term changes and global effects, students and parents the immediate context. It is quite possible that parents and students attribute problems to within school factors while teachers see these as a consequence of national policies.

4 Findings relating to perceptions of the impact of school policies and practice on uptake at Higher

4.1 Earlier research and debate suggested that learners' experiences of language learning in S3 and S4 lead them to dislike languages and therefore not to want to continue with languages in S5.

Our findings are that students are critical of aspects of the curriculum content in S3 and S4, but less concerned about teaching methods or the impact of resources, class size or mixed ability teaching/ grouping. These last three issues, on the other hand, are of concern to teachers. Some students are unwilling to continue language study because of the nature of the curriculum. The other factors, though problematic, are likely to affect uptake only indirectly.

4.2 Earlier research also suggested that there are restrictions preventing students interested in continuing to study languages from doing so. These restrictions arise partly from the options and choices systems within schools and partly from conditions limiting access to Higher imposed by modern languages departments themselves.

Our findings suggest that the two different types of restriction on uptake interact to exclude some potential candidates from higher. While the information and 'mythology' attached to choices at S4, and the structuring of option 'columns' may discourage able students in particular from taking languages when these are placed in opposition to science or other attractive subjects, modern languages departments are also making it difficult for students other than the very able to take Highers in this subject because of the perceived difficulty of the examination.

4.3 Earlier research suggested that, at the point at which students make decisions about Highers, there is no strong encouragement for them to take modern languages from guidance staff, from modern languages teachers themselves, or more generally, from the 'ethos' of the school.

Our findings appear to confirm this picture and suggest that modern languages departments and others with an interest in promoting languages to Higher need to encourage students more actively. In the absence of 'marketing' students are unaware of many of the good reasons why they should continue to study languages, and opt instead for other subjects.

5 Learner attitudes and motivation

5.1 Earlier research had suggested reasons why learners' experiences might predispose them to abandoning language study as soon as it is no longer compulsory. Four issues were raised and explored in our research.

5.2 We firstly considered the possibility that students' experiences of language learning, particularly in S3 and S4, were not intrinsically rewarding, and found considerable evidence to support this hypothesis.

5.3 We looked secondly at the likelihood that students were not interested in other languages or cultures. We found that many students were very interested in other languages and cultures and would have welcomed more emphasis on this aspect of language learning in their course. It also appears that students are in need of more support to enable them to make use of the languages they are learning independently of the school, through reading, watching films and videos, letter-writing and ICT.

5.4 Thirdly, we considered whether it was the case that students saw no material gain for themselves in learning another language (principally in terms of furthering their educational or career goals). We found that students saw long term benefits in language learning but were less convinced of the short-term benefits, in relation to achieving their immediate educational and career goals.

5.5 Fourthly, we investigated whether the expectations which students have of themselves as language learners are met, and how high their confidence in themselves as language learners might be. We found that students and others lacked clear expectations of what they should have achieved at the end of four years of language study, and that implicit expectations may be unrealistically high. As a consequence, students were not confident about their ability to communicate with native speakers and were frustrated by their apparent lack of achievement.

6 Tackling the decline

6.1 The researchers set out to identify which of the characteristics of schools which had succeeded in maintaining or increasing the number of students taking modern language Highers might explain their success, but no clear pattern emerged from our survey data. Headteachers' and principal teachers' accounts of their efforts to promote modern languages were therefore scrutinised to identify the nature of attempts made and explanations for success or failure.

6.2 Many schools have made efforts at both school management and departmental levels, to address the problem of falling numbers at Higher and, in more general terms, to promote language learning. However, only in a limited number of cases did principal teachers of modern languages or headteachers believe that such efforts had made much impact on the declining numbers at Higher and some felt that nothing that schools could do would make any difference.

6.3 Widening the range of languages on offer to students at different stages and supporting a second modern language were seen by both principal teachers and headteachers as one of the most useful means of promoting modern languages and of raising levels of interest and uptake. There was, however, a contrary view expressed by a small number of headteachers who felt that diversification watered down the numbers for particular languages at the S3 and S5 stages and undermined the viability of Higher classes in particular.

6.4 There were few examples of significant extra resources being devoted to promoting languages and raising levels of uptake, with headteachers generally preferring not to make a special case for languages. Nevertheless, it was evident that many schools were coping with the declining uptake by allowing smaller modern language classes at Higher and CSYS than would normally be the case for other subjects. headteachers who had supported this solution said that the situation could not be maintained indefinitely and Higher Still would probably increase the incidence of bi-level teaching in an attempt to make modern languages classes more viable.

6.5 Although a small number of headteachers were looking for improvements in the teaching of modern languages, more felt that departments had done everything they could to raise levels of attainment and interest. Principal teachers were even less inclined to attribute the fall in uptake to failures in teaching approaches and performance of modern languages staff. However, nearly half of those whose schools had maintained or increased numbers going on to Higher thought that improvements in the department had been largely responsible.

6.6 From their perspectives, however, students and parents were looking to the schools to make language learning more enjoyable and more successful although there was no clear (and sometimes conflicting) advice about how this might be achieved. Parents in particular, were looking to schools to offer greater encouragement to young people to continue their modern language learning, and there is some evidence that students also believe that schools (along with other bodies) should promote languages more actively, to make young people aware of the benefits.

7 Conclusions and recommendations

7.1 Two main explanations are put forward for the decline in uptake in modern languages at Higher: students' career focus in S4 and S5, and the 'climate of negativity' characterising language teaching.

7.2 The main concern of students in S4 and S5 is entry into Higher Education or into a career. Competence in a modern language is not seen by students as an essential skill in achieving either of these goals, although they are aware of longer-term (but less immediate) benefits.

7.3 Language teaching is currently characterised by a 'climate of negativity' in which even the best efforts of teachers and their students are viewed critically by wider Scottish society and by students and teachers themselves. This 'climate of negativity' leads teachers to view language

learning as exceptionally difficult and students to become discouraged and to lack confidence in their ability to communicate in the language they have learnt.

7.4 In the light of these conclusions, the researchers make recommendations for changes to

- **the structure of the modern languages course** from P6 to S5, establishing and publicising clear expectations for student achievement at the end of S4, and reviewing the optional status of writing at Standard Grade.
- **course content**, particularly for S3 and S4, reflecting the importance of languages for business and the professions and enhancing cultural elements and intellectual stimulation.
- **teaching methods**, by investigating students' views on methods currently in use, helping students to develop autonomous learning skills and reviewing approaches to the teaching of grammar and vocabulary, with a view to making these more effective and intellectually challenging.
- **resources**, by ensuring that all students have adequate reference materials, access to a range of sources of 'real' foreign language material for the purposes of independent study, and increasing opportunities to come into contact with native speakers of the languages studied; enhancing resources will inevitably have financial implications for schools and local authorities.
- **marketing of modern languages and guidance**, ensuring that unnecessary restrictions are not put in the way of students wishing to take Highers in modern languages and that students are well-informed about the benefits of continuing to Higher in terms of opportunities for study and work placements abroad and career enhancement.
- **recruitment into Higher Education and employment**, by drawing attention to the advantages of language skills, within the European labour market.
- **national perspectives**, by challenging current negative stereotypes of ourselves as linguistically incompetent parochialists and developing imaginative approaches to raising the profile of foreign languages in education and in cultural contexts, particularly the media.
- **promotion of foreign languages in the context of life-long learning**, by ensuring that students complete their years of compulsory language learning feeling positively about their own competence as language learners and prepared to consider returning to language study in later life.

1: Decline in uptake at Higher in modern languages

1.1 Aim of the research

The research arises from a specification by the Scottish Office Education and Industry Department (July 1996) which states that 'there has been a tendency for the uptake of modern language courses leading to SEB examinations at Higher level to decline.' This, it claims, 'is a cause for concern in relation to the development of Higher Still and to the acquisition of modern language skills which are increasingly important for work and leisure.'

The SOEID specification describes the main aim of the research as:

> To identify the main factors which influence students not to pursue modern language courses to Higher level. Identification of these factors should provide a basis for advice on the teaching of languages and the management of delivery and for clarification of the place of languages in the upper school curriculum.

It is important to note that the research is not primarily concerned with the relevance of the Standard Grade course to the full range of students in S3-S4, nor with uptake post-16 in a general sense. As researchers we appreciate of course that these are legitimate matters of concern. The specific focus of the present research, however, is 'uptake at Higher in the upper secondary school'. Why then should the Scottish Office as commissioners of the research consider uptake at Higher to be so important?

The Revised Higher and Standard Grade have undoubtedly been brought closer to each other than were the Traditional Higher and Standard Grade. Nonetheless, we suggest that a Higher in a modern language requires a proficiency that in some respects is qualitatively different from what is required at Standard Grade, with the possible exception of Credit Writing. Even at this early point in our text a potential problem begins to surface: maybe the gap between Standard Grade and Higher is too great. This certainly is a possibility that the research will explore in detail.

The value of a Higher in a modern language is that it gives students sustained experience of a range of tasks that are linguistically and cognitively demanding. These include negotiation, persuasion, presentation, explanation, reporting, discussion, debate and criticism and as such are potentially of value not only in the world of work but also in further study beyond school. A Higher in a modern language[1] therefore offers young Scots prospects of the vocational and educational mobility in the wider Europe from which their counterparts in many other countries already benefit.

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[1] From now on we will use the term modern languages to cover modern foreign languages. In Scottish schools these are mainly French, German and Spanish with others such as Italian and Russian playing a more minor role. This of course does not imply that Scottish Gaelic, English and other heritage languages in Scotland are not 'modern', but the intention behind the SOEID commission was clearly in respect of modern foreign languages and this is what we mean in our report when we use the term modern languages.

1.2 Indicators of uptake

We now set out the extent to which decline in uptake of modern languages at Higher has taken place. In doing so, we rely heavily on the annual reports of SEB[2] and are grateful to them for permission to draw on their figures. Since the research was commissioned by SOEID in 1996, we considered it essential to provide detailed figures for that year. Since 'decline in uptake' was a central concern, it was obviously important to provide figures for previous years and we have chosen the years 1986 and 1976 as being appropriate. We thus provide figures for three years within a span of 20 years. In addition, we have been able to provide figures for 1997 in some cases, in order to look at recent presentations in more detail.

Two words of caution are necessary before any figures are presented. First, during this period of more than 20 years the population of students in S5-S6 of Scottish schools has undoubtedly become much more diverse, not only in academic abilities but also in interests, needs and intentions. Second, the S5-S6 curriculum has changed from one which mainly featured Higher and SYS to one that also includes National Certificate modules. If the figures for modern languages at Higher have declined, this has happened within a context of change in relation to these two key aspects, so it cannot be claimed that 'like' is being exactly compared with 'like'. However, although the uptake of modules at school post-S4, including significant numbers at Level 3 (see Table 1.7), does represent a wish to continue with languages, it is undoubtedly the Higher course which represents the most ambitious progression in language proficiency and which best opens up the educational and vocational possibilities indicated above, and hence our research focus is on uptake at Higher.

The main figures that we provide are:

- **Presentations at O Grade and then Standard Grade for 4th Year Secondary candidates, since 1976.** This affords a picture of the baseline for possible presentations at Higher in S5 and S6 one or two years later.
- **Presentations at Higher in 5th Year Secondary since 1976.** This tells us the extent to which students move straight on from O Grade or Standard Grade to take a Higher one year later.
- **Presentations at Higher in 6th Year Secondary since 1976.** This tells us the extent to which students gain a Higher in a modern language two years after taking O grade or Standard Grade. The figures themselves of course do not tell us why they do so two years rather than one year later.
- **Presentations at Higher overall since 1976.** These figures offer a picture of the extent to which Further Education (FE) and external candidates contribute to the overall uptake at Higher in modern languages. Is there any evidence, for example, of a principle of compensation whereby FE might be picking up substantial numbers of candidates for Higher in a modern language who did not take this when at school?

[2] SEB: Scottish Examinations Board, now the Scottish Qualifications Authority. Since we are drawing on the SEB annual reports of past years, we generally retain the acronym of SEB except when referring later in the report to possible future implications, in which case we use the term SQA.

Given the substantial changes in context mentioned earlier (wider range of students; introduction of modules), we considered it would not be helpful simply to provide the presentation figures for the various languages. Instead, wherever we present figures for modern languages we also present figures for English since this is the subject with the largest uptake at both Standard Grade and Higher. In addition. where appropriate, we provide figures for a range of other subjects in order to show how modern languages have been faring in relation to their possible 'competitors'.

The figures also indicate the relative uptake for male and female students. It is well-known that female students have traditionally taken a modern language at Higher in greater numbers than male students. But does this remain so in recent years, in the face of emergent subjects that may possibly be attracting some female students away from modern languages?

1.3 Presentations at O Grade and Standard Grade: Students in S4

The following points arise from modern languages presentations at O Grade/Standard Grade at S4, as set out in Table 1.1. The figures for English are also included.

The figures indicate that:

- Between 1976 and 1996 there has been a major increase in the numbers of presentations in modern languages for students in S4. Whereas in 1976 the presentations were less than half of those for English, by 1996 they were exceeding those for English, though of course some students were taking two modern languages.
- There was a slight increase between 1976 and 1981, related to the size of the S4 population (with English also witnessing an increase) possibly resulting from the national and regional attempts, beginning in the late 1970s, to make a modern language more attractive to the full range of ability, particularly in S1-S2.
- From 1981 to 1986 the presentation numbers drop for all modern languages, though it should be noted that they drop for English also. Again, this fall was related to the size of the S4 population.
- By 1991 the numbers are beginning to pick up, perhaps as a result of the implementation of Standard Grade and Circular 1178 (Scottish Office, 1989) which strongly recommended a modern language for all to age 16 as compared with the previous O Grade which did not cater for the full range of S4 students.
- By 1995-96 the numbers have increased substantially as the policy of a modern language for all to age 16 attains more widespread adoption.
- Overwhelmingly the main modern language is French. It is almost as dominant in 1996 as it was twenty years earlier. German and Spanish have gained some ground in relation to French, continuing to do so in 1997, and are well-

established in second and third places but remain well behind French. The other modern languages occupy a very minor position throughout, with Russian now in jeopardy, being the only modern language to show a marked decline over this period.

- In 1976 and 1986 female presentations heavily outnumber those for males, but by 1996 males have almost caught up in French and German, the two main first modern languages in Scottish schools. This is no doubt due to a modern language being more or less compulsory for all to age 16. However, female presentations still clearly outnumber those for males in the other modern languages in 1996, probably reflecting the fact that to some extent they are learnt as optional second modern languages.

Table 1.1: Presentations at O Grade or Standard Grade: Candidates in 4th Year Secondary

	1976	1981	1986	1991	1995	1996	1997
English							
Male	28683	30146	27937	30057	30814	31558	30875
Female	31396	33780	30823	29428	30027	30921	30371
Total	**60079**	**63926**	**58760**	**59485**	**60841**	**62479**	**61246**
French							
Male	9261	9202	7950	9646	19986	20582	19641
				(W)6630	(W)8030	(W)7811	7537
Female	14154	16067	14516	15169	21531	21939	20739
				(W)11149	(W)12298	(W)12181	11565
Total	**23415**	**25269**	**22466**	**24815**	**41517**	**42521**	**40380**
				(W)17779	**(W)20328**	**(W)19992**	**(W)19102**
German							
Male	1464	1854	1687	2498	7686	7921	8359
				(W)1758	(W)3766	(W)3611	3780
Female	3693	4274	3709	4272	8078	8277	8762
				(W)3046	(W)5251	(W)5230	5432
Total	**5157**	**6128**	**5396**	**6590**	**15764**	**16198**	**17121**
				(W)4804	**(W)9017**	**(W)8841**	**(W)9212**
Italian							
Male	105	71	39	60	192	241	210
				(W)20	(W)87	(W)119	90
Female	199	216	122	142	318	335	395
				(W)74	(W)232	(W)243	284
Total	**304**	**287**	**161**	**202**	**510**	**576**	**605**
				(W)94	**(W)319**	**(W)362**	**(W)374**
Russian							
Male	56	52	33	32	23	10	4
				(W)15	(W)5	(W)2	4
Female	99	84	66	73	20	16	7
				(W)50	(W)12	(W)12	7
Total	**155**	**136**	**99**	**105**	**43**	**26**	**11**
				(W)65	**(W)17**	**(W)14**	**(W)11**
Spanish							
Male	195	283	236	276	828	886	921
				(W)173	(W)344	(W)348	415
Female	458	636	490	564	1223	1347	1487
				(W)375	(W)823	(W)930	1085
Total	**653**	**919**	**726**	**840**	**2051**	**2233**	**2408**
				(W)548	**(W)1167**	**(W)1278**	**(W)1500**

Note: These S4 Tables cover, at various points, O Grade, both Traditional and Alternative, and Standard Grade in modern languages. (W) signifies the additional optional Writing paper which is taken at Credit or General levels of the Standard Grade exam.

1.4 Presentations at Higher in S5

Table 1.2 sets out the presentations at Higher for candidates in Fifth Year Secondary.

Table 1.2: Presentations at Higher: Candidates in Fifth Year Secondary

	1976	1986	1996	1997
English				
Male	12033	11705	9566	9355
Female	13596	15287	13443	13527
Total	**25629**	**26992**	**23009**	**22882**
French				
Male	2655	1445	931	845
Female	5868	4393	2825	2601
Total	**8523**	**5838**	**3756**	**3447**
German				
Male	436	327	387	374
Female	1836	1169	1253	1173
Total	**2272**	**1496**	**1640**	**1547**
Italian				
Male	45	12	19	22
Female	98	52	87	62
Total	**143**	**64**	**106**	**84**
Russian				
Male	30	11	3	10
Female	50	28	10	9
Total	**80**	**39**	**13**	**19**
Spanish				
Male	85	53	73	90
Female	210	177	378	349
Total	**295**	**230**	**451**	**439**

Note: The presentations figures for 1998 will not be available in their final form until December 1998. Initial indications from provisional SQA figures however point to a continuing decline in uptake at Higher.

The following points arise from the Higher presentations in S5:

- Whereas the numbers for English show a slight decline from 1976 to 1996, the decline in modern languages is substantial, particularly in French where it is much more substantial.
- An exception to this decline is Spanish which shows a substantial increase in female students, though its numbers in relation to French and German remain small.
- It is relevant to look at the percentage of 'eligible' candidates from S4 who proceed to Higher in S5. By 'eligible' we mean those gaining a C or better at O Grade or Grade 3 or better at Standard Grade. In 1976, for French there were 6879 at A, 3580 at B and 4258 at C, making a total of 14717. This total generated 8523 presentations at Higher the following year, ie 58%. Of the 41517 presentations in French at Standard Grade in S4 (1995) there were 4680 at Grade 1, 7449 at Grade 2 and 8550 at Grade 3, making a total of 20679. Of these, only 3756 were presented at Higher in S5 (1996), ie 18%. However, if we understand 'eligibility' as being defined not by Grades 1-3 at Standard Grade but by Grades 1-2 in the optional Credit Writing paper (taken by a smaller number of candidates), then the proportion rises to 58%, the same as in 1976.

- There is a marked gender imbalance in modern languages at Higher, with female students outnumbering males by over 3:1. This imbalance has become more marked since 1976.

1.5 Presentations at Higher in S6

Table 1.3 sets out the presentation figures for Higher in S6, again with English as a basis for comparison.

Table 1.3: Presentations at Higher: Candidates in Sixth Year Secondary

	1976	1986	1996	1997
English				
Male	3158	**3578**	4373	4750
Female	2197	3431	4675	5046
Total	**5355**	**7009**	**9048**	**9796**
French				
Male	758	385	268	305
Female	1363	1009	822	850
Total	**2121**	**1484**	**1090**	**1155**
German				
Male	170	87	127	128
Female	455	384	371	332
Total	**625**	**471**	**498**	**460**
Italian				
Male	32	21	17	12
Female	97	81	53	43
Total	**129**	**102**	**70**	**55**
Russian				
Male	11	2	-	1
Female	17	8	4	1
Total	**28**	**10**	**4**	**2**
Spanish				
Male	71	27	24	46
Female	155	120	124	187
Total	**226**	**147**	**148**	**233**

The following points arise from the Highers presentations in S6:

- Whereas presentations in English show a slight decline from 1976 to 1996 at S5, the S6 presentations for English show a clear increase, with the consequence that the S5+S6 presentations for English in 1996 and 1997 exceed those for all the other dates listed.
- Presentations in S6 for modern languages (except Spanish), on the other hand, show a strong decline, with 1996 and 1997 well below 1976.
- Whereas almost as many males as females take Higher English in S6, there is a clear gender imbalance in modern languages, with females outnumbering males by over 3:1.
- There is therefore no evidence of substantial numbers of school students making a tactical choice to go for a modern language at Higher in S6 rather than S5. It should be borne in mind that some of those taking their Higher in S6 will be repeating a Higher taken in S5, so that not all S6 presentations will reflect additional candidates.

1.6 Presentations at Higher overall, including in Further Education (FE) and external candidates

Table 1.4 sets out the presentations at Higher for all categories of candidates.

Table 1.4: Presentations at Higher: All Candidates (including schools, FE and external)

		1976	1986	1996	1997
English					
	Male	17897	17220	14793	14919
	Female	20236	22099	19648	20070
	Total	**38133**	**39319**	**34441**	**34989**
French					
	Male	3720	2015	1267	1226
	Female	7890	5869	3831	3614
	Total	**11610**	**7884**	**5098**	**4840**
German					
	Male	685	473	555	534
	Female	2445	1664	1685	1544
	Total	**3130**	**2137**	**2240**	**2078**
Italian					
	Male	102	67	51	54
	Female	262	232	167	134
	Total	**364**	**299**	**218**	**188**
Russian					
	Male	45	20	3	11
	Female	69	42	14	11
	Total	**114**	**62**	**17**	**22**
Spanish					
	Male	204	142	150	184
	Female	455	421	573	604
	Total	**659**	**563**	**723**	**788**

The following points arise from the overall figures that embrace all categories of candidate at Higher:

- The overall trend for English presentations at Higher from 1976 to 1996 and 1997 is one of slight decline, though the figures rise from 1996 to 1997, but with a gender imbalance appearing in the 1990s. On the other hand, the decline in modern languages during the same period is major and continuing.
- There is therefore no evidence of a principle of compensation being in operation, whereby FE and externals might have been picking up significant numbers at Higher in modern languages that were not taking a Higher at school.

1.7 Modern languages in relation to other subjects

We considered it would be useful to set out the rank order of presentations both at Standard Grade (S4 candidates) and Higher (S5 and S6 together, since the figures for these separately are not available). This tells us whether modern languages are moving up or down the uptake 'charts'. How stable are they at Standard Grade as a result of the official national policy recommendation that a modern language should be studied by all students during the first four years of their secondary education (Scottish Office Circular 1178: 1989)? How 'downwardly mobile', on

the other hand, are they at Higher, and which subjects are threatening their position?

Table 1.5 sets out the rank ordering of presentations at Standard Grade (1993-97) in the case of S4 candidates.

Table 1.5: Rank order of presentations (1993-1997) for subjects at Standard Grade with a minimum of 500 candidates. All candidates at S4

	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997
Mathematics	1	1	1	1	1
English	2	2	2	2	2
French	3	3	3	3	3
French (Writing)	4	6	9	10	10
Geography	5	5	5	4	4
Chemistry	6	4	4	5	5
Physics	7	7	6	8	8
History	8	8	8	7	7
Biology	9	9	7	6	6
Art & Design	10	10	10	9	9
Computing studies	11	11	11	11	11
Office & Information Studies	12	12	12	12	12
Science	13	13	13	14	15
Physical Education	14	15	15	13	14
Modern Studies	15	16	16	16	16
Craft & Design	16	17	17	17	17
German	17	14	14	15	13
Home Economics	18	18	18	18	18
German (Writing)	19	19	19	19	19
Music	20	20	20	20	20
Technological Studies	21	21	22	23	-
Graphics Communication	-	22	21	21	21
Accounting & Finance	-	23	23	22	22

From these figures it is evident that Mathematics and English are well ahead in the top two places, with little between them. French is stable in third place, and indeed throughout these five years it has remained well ahead of the 4th-placed subject. French Writing, however, has suffered a comparative decline, partly because over-presentation for Writing was considered a problem in the early years. No subjects show a marked upwards or downwards trend, though Biology has moved from 9th to 6th place.

The rank ordering of presentations at Higher is shown in Table 1.6. For this we have chosen a different time-scale from Table 5, in order to chart the course of modern languages' comparative decline since 1976. The figures that we use here are for 'All School', ie S5 and S6 combined.

Table 1.6: Numbers of presentations at Higher and rank ordering (RO) of subjects. 'All school' candidates

	1976	(RO)	1986	(RO)	1996	(RO)
English	30984	1	34001	1	32057	1
Mathematics	17177	2	21885	2	19655	2
Chemistry	11874	3	14088	3	11583	4
Physics	11817	4	12161	4	11903	3
French	10644	5	7322	8	4846	10
History	8920	6	8359	7	6840	8
Geography	8629	7	8711	6	9068	6
Biology	6494	8	10471	5	11443	5
Modern Studies	3198	9	5032	10	7154	7
Art	3057	10	5350	9	6566	9
Computing					4005	11
Sec. Studies					3939	12
Man & Info.					3557	13
PE					3133	14

Note: The term Art has been replaced by Art and Design during this period. Computing Studies and Physical Education are new subjects at Higher since 1986.

The figures in Table 1.6 indicate that:

- French has dropped from 5th to 10th position, with its presentation figures more than halved.
- Biology has moved from 8th to 5th, with a substantial gain in numbers. The other sciences (Chemistry and Physics) hold their own.
- Modern Studies has also gained, rising from 9th to 7thplace and with a significant increase in numbers, though possibly at the expense of History.
- French has been overtaken by Art and Design, with the gap widening, and its position is now being threatened by other subjects, both by new subjects since 1986 (Computing Studies, Physical Education) and by subjects that were there already but that may have been successfully attuned to modern needs (Secretarial Studies, Management and Information Studies).

1.8 Uptake of modern languages modules at school

Table 1.7 below sets out the uptake figures for National Certificate modules at school in Session 1995-96. We are very grateful to SQA for calculating these figures for us. SQA does not record stage at school on the current database of vocational qualifications, so it has been estimated by using either (a) stage from the SCE/CSYS files if the candidate attempted SCE/CSYS using the same Scottish Candidate Number or (b) stage as estimated from the candidate's date of birth. The 'Other' column consists of adults in schools and candidates whose age fell outwith that expected for S3-S6 students.

Table 1.7 National Certificate modules 1995-96. School entries for modern languages

Language	Sessions	Entries	S3	S4	S5	S6	Other
French 1	1995-96	588	258	112	84	25	109
	1996-97	544	261	135	99	35	14
German 1	1995-96	557	117	99	214	64	63
	1996-97	431	87	83	159	64	38
Italian 1	1995-96	679	63	97	270	204	45
	1996-97	651	62	88	281	201	19
Russian 1	1995-96	90	4	6	35	42	3
	1996-97	83	4	1	30	45	3
Spanish 1	1995-96	1711	149	170	881	409	102
	1996-97	1411	160	148	749	341	13
French 2	1995-96	293	12	66	146	49	20
	1996-97	283	20	24	204	33	2
German 2	1995-96	361	7	65	160	69	60
	1996-97	245	22	16	121	54	32
Italian 2	1995-96	468	11	27	248	171	11
	1996-97	539	-	36	283	208	12
Russian 2	1995-96	13	3	1	4	5	-
	1996-97	27	4	2	7	13	1
Spanish 2	1995-96	1094	6	50	587	413	38
	1996-97	1003	22	42	599	325	15
French 3 (x2)	1995-96	1082	-	57	884	120	21
	1996-97	1063	-	29	917	103	14
German 3 (x2)	1995-96	424	-	20	356	47	1
	1996-97	571	-	19	491	58	3
Italian 3 (x2)	1995-96	72	-	3	41	25	3
	1996-97	46	-	-	27	19	-
Spanish 3 (x2)	1995-96	75	-	7	44	23	1
	1996-97	154	-	3	104	46	1
French 4 (x2)	1995-96	41	-	1	30	8	2
	1996-97	43	-	-	-	-	-
German 4 (x2)	1995-96	13	-	1	10	1	1
	1996-97		-	-	7	2	-
Italian 4 (x2)	1995-96	10	-	-	5	5	-
	1996-97	7	-	3	1	3	-
Spanish 4 (x2)	1995-96	-	-	-	-	-	-
	1996-97	6	-	-	2	4	-
French 5 (x2)	1995-96	1	-	-	-		-
	1996-97	5	-	-	-	5	-
German 5 (x2)	1995-96	-	-	-	-	-	-
	1996-97	5	-	-	-	5	-
Total	1995-96	7572	630	782	3999	1681	480
	1996-97	7126	642	629	4112	1574	169

These figures for the uptake of modules at school indicate the following:

- a significant uptake in French at Level 3 in S5-S6 which suggests that some students on completion of the Standard Grade French course wish to continue with that language but (for whatever reason) do not do so by taking the Higher. Perhaps their grades at Standard Grade were not quite good enough; perhaps their grades were good enough but they did not take Credit Writing; perhaps their decision was influenced by timetable or other considerations. At any rate,

there is a significant demand for continuity if not full progression in French. There is a similar pattern in German, though predictably with smaller numbers

- a significant uptake in Spanish at Level 1 in S5-S6. This suggests that some students who have taken a foreign language other than Spanish to Standard Grade either drop that language in S5 in order to begin with Spanish 1 or take Spanish 1 in addition to continuing with their first foreign language. Italian shows a similar pattern to Spanish, though with lower numbers. Both Italian and Spanish show significant numbers taking Level 2 in S5-S6, which suggests some progression in the language
- some evidence of modules in French, German, Spanish and Italian at Level 1 being taken in S3-S4. This could be instead of a Standard Grade course in that language or in addition to a Standard Grade course in another language
- little encouragement for Russian in the modules at any level.

Overall, the modules figures do add something to our understanding of modern languages at school, particularly in S5-S6. If the figures for uptake at Higher in these years show a decline, the figures for the modules do suggest that modern languages are not being altogether abandoned. If we take the figures for Higher and modules in S5-S6 together, they still show a situation of considerable 'language loss' from the Standard Grade presentations but perhaps they suggest some slight hope for the future if the articulation of course-level embodied in the framework for Higher Still proves capable of effective implementation.

1.9 Performance in modern languages national examinations

An indication of the general levels of performance in modern languages at Standard Grade and Higher is given in the SEB annual reports. In Tables 1.8 and 1.9 we set out key representative words and phrases selected from these reports.

Table 1.8: Performance in modern languages at Standard Grade. Key words and phrases

Speaking	1993	Impressive
	1994	High standards maintained
	1995	Very satisfactory
	1996	Very satisfactory
Listening	1993	Satisfactory
	1994	Generally satisfactory
	1995	Very satisfactory
	1996	Very satisfactory
Reading	1993	Satisfactory
	1994	Generally satisfactory
	1995	Very satisfactory
	1996	Very satisfactory
Writing	1993	Substantial number received no award
	1994	Relatively high percentage received no award
	1995	Slight improvement, particularly at Credit level, but percentage of no awards unacceptably high
	1996	Performance mixed at both Credit and General levels. A significant number, particularly in French, not adequately prepared.

Table 1.8 makes it clear that the main problem with student performance at Standard Grade is in the optional Writing paper where Principal Examiners reported much over-presentation in 1993 and 1994. This is highly significant in that, according to SQA, it is good performance in this paper that is the best predictor of subsequent good performance in a modern language Higher.

Table 1.9: Performance in modern languages at Higher. Key words and phrases

1993		Performance overall was satisfactory. Parucular weaknesses were ability to translate accurately from the modern language and to express oneself accurately in writing the modern language.
1994	Speaking	Many candidates performed well
	Reading	Many candidates coping fairly competently.
	Listening	Performance variable
	Translation into English	Problems with attention to detail
	Writing	Problems with accuracy.
1995	Speaking	Many good performances
	Listening	Generally satisfactory
	Translation into English and Essay	Problems with attention to detail and accuracy
1996	Speaking	Very satisfactory
	Listening	Very satisfactory
	Reading	Comprehension questions tackled competently but many candidates hampered by poor English expression.
	Translation into English	Many performed badly because of poor English expression and lack of precision.
	Essay in the modern language	Some candidates produced excellent work ..... but a significant number of essays showed a lack of simple grammar rules.

From Table 1.9 we can see that examiners are relatively satisfied with standards of speaking and listening, but have concerns about reading, translation and writing. In particular, examiners are critical of students' grammatical competence – in once case this extends to students' ability to express themselves in English as well as in the modern language.

1.10 Percentages of awards made at Standard Grade (Grades 1, 2, 3) and Higher (A, B)

Another indication of performance in the national examinations is the percentage of awards made at each level.

Tables 1.10 and 1.11 set out the percentages of awards made at Standard Grade and Higher for 1996. In addition to modern languages, information is given on a number of other subjects for purposes of comparison. In each case only the top grades are given. This is because at Standard Grade it is the three top grades of 1, 2 and possibly 3 that will generate most if not all subsequent presentations at Higher, particularly in S5, and also because students in S4 may be influenced in their choice of subjects at Higher by their perceptions of their chances of obtaining a high grade at Standard Grade.

Table 1.10 Percentages of awards made at Grades 1, 2 and 3 at Standard Grade. All school candidates

	1996					
	1	2	3		1	2	3
English				**Mathematics**			
Male	6.4	22.8	33.5	Male	14.0	13.3	22.3
Female	12.1	32.9	33.2	Female	15.8	13.9	21.9
All	**9.2**	**27.9**	**33.3**	**All**	**14.9**	**13.6**	**22.1**
French				**Biology**			
Male	7.2	14.7	18.7	Male	18.6	29.8	25.5
Female	15.6	22.5	21.3	Female	18.5	33.4	26.2
All	**11.5**	**18.7**	**20.1**	**All**	**18.5**	**32.3**	**26.0**
German				**Chemistry**			
Male	8.6	16.9	22.5	Male	26.8	33.7	22.9
Female	19.4	25.3	22.5	Female	28.2	35.2	23.3
All	**14.1**	**21.2**	**22.5**	**All**	**27.5**	**34.4**	**23.1**
Italian				**Physics**			
Male	13.7	16.5	21.2	Male	29.9	31.7	24.6
Female	28.5	30.6	18.1	Female	39.5	32.7	18.6
All	**23.1**	**24.7**	**19.1**	**All**	**33.1**	**32.0**	**22.6**
Russian				**Science**			
Male	16.7	8.3	8.3	Male	0.4	4.1	24.3
Female	62.5	0	0	Female	0.6	3.9	22.8
All	**38.7**	**3.2**	**3.2**	**All**	**0.4**	**4.0**	**23.6**
Spanish				**Geography**			
Male	9.1	17.5	19.8	Male	11.7	22.0	19.8
Female	23.8	28.4	22.6	Female	17.6	25.5	19.6
All	**18.5**	**24.1**	**21.4**	**All**	**14.2**	**23.4**	**19.8**
French Writing				**History**			
Male	8.9	16.9	14.1	Male	11.8	18.8	18.3
Female	13.6	21.2	16.3	Female	17.5	22.5	19.7
All	**11.8**	**19.5**	**15.4**	**All**	**14.9**	**20.8**	**19.1**
German Writing				**Computing**			
Male	6.7	16.3	20.6	Male	13.4	20.7	19.3
Female	12.8	22.4	22.1	Female	16.5	24.1	20.4
All	**10.3**	**19.9**	**21.5**	**All**	**14.5**	**21.9**	**19.7**
Spanish Writing							
Male	8.9	14.1	12.5				
Female	10.5	21.9	18.8				
All	**10.1**	**19.9**	**17.1**				

The following observations arise from Table 1.10:

- Compared with the modern languages, there is a slightly smaller percentage of Grade 1s in English but a much higher percentage of Grades 2 and 3.
- The percentages of high grades for French are lower than for the other modern languages. This may be partly explained by the fact that some of those studying the other modern languages are good languages students taking a second modern language, but another explanation may be that French poses more problems than do the others.

- The relatively low percentage of high grades for French may conceivably be having an influence on students' perceptions of the feasibility for them of taking French at Higher.

- Taking the 'key words and phrases' from the SEB reports along with the percentages given in Table 1.10, a slight sense of contradiction begins to occur. If the SEB reports offer key words and phrases such as 'impressive', 'high standards maintained', 'satisfactory', 'very satisfactory' in respect of performance at Standard Grade, why then are there so few grades of 1 or 2 in comparison with other subjects? We assume the verbal reports indicate that some students were performing well at Credit level, others performing well at General and others performing well at Foundation. They manifestly do not mean, however, that substantial numbers are reaching high levels of performance. This possible contradiction raises the issue of what modern languages teachers are really aiming for at Standard Grade. Is it to enable different groups to perform well at one or other of the three levels (Credit, General and Foundation), or is it to raise the overall standard of performance in order to increase the percentages gaining the highest grades? This is an issue we shall explore in later Chapters of the report.

- The Writing examination is taken mainly by students who are average or above, yet the percentages gaining a Grade 1 or 2 in the Writing examination are relatively low for all of the modern languages. Of the 42614 presentations in French at Standard Grade in 1996, for example, 20102 also took French Writing. Of these, 11.8% gained Grade 1, ie 2366 students, and 19.5% gained Grade 2, ie 3929 students. This makes 6295 students out of the 42614 who gain the grades that best predict good performance at Higher. In the event, the S5 Higher presentations in French from this same population were 3756, (ie 58% of those gaining Grades 1 or 2 in Credit Writing the previous year, as already indicated), which means that a significant number of those gaining Credit Writing did not go on to take Higher French the following year.

- What is particularly striking about these percentages, particularly those for Grades 1 and 2 which represent Credit level at Standard Grade, is that they are lower for modern languages than for all the other subjects listed and particularly so in comparison with Biology and Chemistry, both for male and female students but especially males. The exception is Science (often called General Science) where the percentages gaining Credit (Grades 1 and 2) are very low. It is clear that, whatever the stated purposes of General Science and the specific subjects of Biology, Chemistry and Physics, the Science curriculum operates differently from modern languages. Whereas 'modern languages for All' means Credit, General and Foundation courses at Standard Grade, with an additional and more difficult hoop (Credit Writing) to jump through in order to maximise chances of a good grade at Higher, 'Science for All' may be commonly interpreted as meaning a General Science course for the bottom to middle range, leading to Foundation or General, with three separate sciences sitting on top of this (Biology, Chemistry and Physics) for the middle to top of the range at General and Credit, offering students a more

straightforward progression to Higher than appears to b e the case in modern languages.

In Table 1.11 the percentages gaining the top grades of A and B at Higher are given, because these two grades count particularly strongly for entry to Higher Education.

From Table 1.11 it will be noted that the percentages gaining Grades A or B at Higher in a modern language are at least comparable with the other subjects that are listed, and in several cases, higher. In other words, those students who actually opt to take a Higher in a modern language tend to do well. This of course does not mean that modern languages at Higher are easier than other subjects. A much more likely explanation is that, possibly for reasons referred to in the discussion of Table 1.10 dealing with Standard Grade, a strategy of avoidance is being implemented whereby students choose to take subjects other than a modern language, leaving it to be taken mainly by those whose chances of gaining a good grade are good.

Table 1.11: Percentages of A and B passes at Higher. All school candidates

	1996				
	A	B		A	B
English			**Biology**		
Male	12.9	20.1	Male	16.3	24.6
Female	16.1	22.3	Female	14.0	24.2
All	**14.7**	**21.3**	**All**	**14.7**	**24.3**
French			**Chemistry**		
Male	19.4	23.4	Male	19.6	24.9
Female	19.1	24.8	Female	16.5	25.1
All	**19.1**	**24.5**	**All**	**18.1**	**25.0**
German			**Geography**		
Male	21.2	24.5	Male	12.1	24.0
Female	22.2	24.7	Female	19.2	28.8
All	**22.0**	**24.6**	**All**	**15.2**	**26.1**
Italian			**History**		
Male	27.8	25.0	Male	12.1	27.5
Female	24.3	19.3	Female	14.3	27.3
All	**25.0**	**20.5**	**All**	**13.4**	**27.4**
Russian			**Computing Studies**		
Male	33.3	66.7	Male	16.3	21.9
Female	78.6	14.3	Female	15.6	21.3
All	**70.6**	**23.5**	**All**	**16.2**	**21.8**
Spanish			**Maths**		
Male	42.3	18.6	Male	14.6	24.1
Female	27.5	20.7	Female	14.4	26.9
All	**29.9**	**20.4**	**All**	**14.5**	**25.4**

The Scottish Qualifications Authority has its own method of calculating the relative difficulty of subjects at Standard Grade and Higher. Their annual reports, making use of these calculations, indicate that French, German and Spanish, and particularly French, tend to be more difficult than most other subjects at Standard Grade, whereas Biology, Chemistry and Physics are comparatively easier. Geography and History are also more difficult, though less so than French.

At Higher, French and German are calculated to be consistently more difficult than most other subjects, though Spanish is generally easier. Mathematics, Biology, Chemistry and Physics (in contrast to Standard Grade) have now become more difficult, and so modern languages have become somewhat 'easier' in relation to these subjects. In addition, according to SQA, modern languages have become less 'difficult' in relation to what they were in the 1970s and 1980s. Of the other subjects, Geography has become easier. History fluctuates on the boundary between easier and more difficult.

1.11 Summary of key points in relation to decline in uptake at Higher in modern languages

The analysis provided in the preceding sections allows the following key summary points to be highlighted:

1. There has been a major increase over the past twenty years in uptake of modern languages at Standard Grade in S4.
2. There has been a major decline over the same period in uptake of modern languages at Higher, both in absolute terms and also relative to other subjects. An exception is Spanish at Higher in S5 where the numbers rise. The decline strongly affects both male and female students, though males more so. The 1998 figures show there are no signs of the decline having levelled off.
3. The above two points taken together underline the massive gap that has opened up between presentations in modern languages at Standard Grade in S4 and presentations at Higher, regardless of whether this is Higher in S5, S6 or subsequently. To some extent this decline is offset by uptake in Modules at S5-S6, especially in French at Level 3 and Spanish at Levels 1 and 2, but this modular uptake does not greatly reduce the gap between presentations at S4 and overall presentations (Higher plus modules) at S5-S6.
4. The decline at Higher is more substantial in French than in the other languages. French, though, remains by far the dominant modern language. German and Spanish have gained some ground during the period in question but do not challenge French's position.
5. Performance in national examinations, according to SEB reports, is generally satisfactory or highly satisfactory in Speaking, Listening and Reading, but there are grounds for concern in respect of Writing (at Standard Grade) and accurate command of modern language grammar and written expression at Higher.
6. The percentages gaining high or fairly high grades in modern languages are less high than for English at Standard Grade, with particularly low percentages gaining Grades 1 and 2 in Writing (from a cohort moreover that is selected for ability). They are markedly less high than for other subjects such as Biology and Chemistry. In an educational climate of 'high stakes assessment' in which high grades are important, though in different ways, for both schools and students, it may be that students' perceptions of the comparative difficulty of modern languages at Standard Grade, especially in Writing, may conceivably

act as a disincentive to continuation for Higher. Despite this, at Higher the percentages scoring A or B in modern languages are in line with most other subjects and in fact above those for English.

7. Whatever the internal causes of decline within modern languages, they have been losing out because of (i) the rising popularity of the sciences, especially Biology, (ii) the introduction of new subjects and (iii) increasing numbers of S5-S6 students taking a mixture of National Certificate and Higher courses. A related problem may be the pattern of curricular design for modern languages, whereby an optional paper (Credit Writing) which is more difficult than the other papers is the best predictor of good attainment at Higher. A different curricular design exists for Science, whereby bottom-to middle-range students tend to take General Science while middle-to top-range students may take Biology, Chemistry and Physics, each of which can lead directly to Higher without the complication of a more difficult optional paper. It may be that these contrasting structures benefit the sciences and penalise modern languages.

2: Factors to be investigated

2.1 Introduction

Whereas Chapter 1 presented objective facts and figures, the present chapter is more concerned with subjectivity: thoughts, perceptions, feelings, values and resultant actions. Given the background of declining uptake in modern languages at Higher in Scotland, this is almost inevitably an area rich in debate, anecdote and speculation. Our intention as researchers is to set out as neutrally as possible the characteristics of the Scottish context for languages and to highlight any factors that seem potentially important by referring to research that has already been published.

The chapter consists of four sections:

- First, we provide a commentary on the Scottish context for learning a modern foreign language.
- Second, we present a number of possible explanations for the decline in uptake of modern languages at Higher that the Scottish Office set out in its prescription for the research and asked us to investigate. In order to provide some preliminary data drawn not from our own present research but from studies already conducted by others, we report on a research study of drop-out from languages in England and on other research in Scotland and elsewhere that, though not directly concerned with decline in uptake at Higher, has a bearing on our concerns.
- Third, we present a limited selection of the international research on the role of attitude, motivation and other key factors in learning a second or modern language. We discuss how these factors in recent years have undergone re-interpretation and development by languages researchers.
- Finally, we show how the background of prior research as illustrated above has influenced the design of our own study of decline in the uptake of modern languages at Higher in Scotland.

2.2 The Scottish context

Throughout our text we maintain a distinction between modern and second language-learning. For most of the population of Scotland French, German, Spanish and Italian are modern foreign languages whereas Scottish Gaelic would be a second language since it is indigenous to Scotland and is used as a living, everyday language by a significant minority of our national community. The motivation for learning a second language is not necessarily the same as for learning a modern language, and (as already explained) for purposes of clarity we restrict the term modern languages to the notion of modern foreign languages.

The context for learning a modern language in Scotland is different from the context for learning a modern language in many other European countries in two key respects: **exposure** and **societal motivation**:

Exposure

By 'exposure' we imply 'opportunity to use', that is to hear the modern language, to read, write and speak it in a range of different contexts, including school. In Holland, to name but one country as an example, less time is spent in learning a modern language at primary school than we spend in Scotland. Yet, Dutch children who go to secondary school have learnt at least half of their modern language (which in their case is almost universally English) outside the school system - they pick it up from music, magazines, films, television. In Scotland on the other hand there is no such out-of-school exposure to any modern language. This places an additional burden on modern languages teachers in Scotland: not only do they have to teach the language - eg its grammar, vocabulary, functions - they also have to provide their students with the exposure to that language in order to compensate for the exposure that is not received out of school. In this sense two underlying factors come into play that are widely acknowledged to be central to learning a modern language: **amount** and **intensity of exposure**. For children in many continental countries, their amount of exposure is a function of 'time at school' plus 'time out of school' and this affects them from an early age, whereas in Scotland the amount of exposure is much more a function of 'time at school' only, normally beginning in P6. In addition, continental students' out-of-school exposure to a modern language is often self-initiated since it reflects their own perceptions of their needs, enthusiasms and interests, and hence their individual identity is engaged at a level of intensity that could not reasonably be expected to be equalled in contexts where the exposure to the language occurs almost entirely at school.

Societal Motivation

In most other countries of Europe people at large are generally persuaded of the importance of learning other languages. Being surrounded by other languages, they are linguistically less insular than we in Scotland have allowed ourselves to become. It is only in the present century that Scotland appears to have moved strongly towards becoming a country dominated by one language: English. Well into the 19th century Scotland was a society in which Scots and Scottish Gaelic had many more speakers than they have today. The diminution of Scotland's linguistic vitality during the 20th century was not simply the reflection of a historical trend. It was also the product of particular educational, social and political policies which had a strongly marginalising effect on Scotland's languages, as documented by eminent historians such as Smout (1987). Although it is beyond dispute that to be a well-educated, literate speaker of international English is an immense boost in the modern world, it is also fair to state that if the population of a country generally allows itself to develop a mind-set which perceives monolingualism as the norm (especially in English), this is less than conducive to learning other languages, whether indigenous or foreign. In fact, most of the world's population perceives some form of bi- or multilingualism as the norm, a capacity which is not only functionally useful to them but which also allows them to perceive reality in more than one way. Young Scots will not acquire this capacity if their linguistic repertoire is limited to English plus a low level of competence in another language.

National policy for education since the mid-1980s, however, has reasserted the value of languages, both in respect of indigenous languages such as Scots (eg National Resource Centre for Scots) and Scottish Gaelic (eg support for Gaelic-medium education) and also in respect of modern languages (eg though the national initiatives on languages at primary school and languages for all to age 16).

At any rate, in most countries on the continent of Europe it would be unthinkable for students in their equivalent of the upper secondary school to be abandoning a modern language. True, their modern language is mostly English, but by no means exclusively so, and many continental students at this level learn two modern languages. The reasons for educational systems on the continent of Europe attaching higher value than we do to modern languages in the upper secondary school appear to be twofold. Not only is the importance of a multilingual competence for future academic and vocational mobility in the new Europe better understood but also it is seen as fundamental to the education of the future citizens of the new Europe. Indeed, the 1997 White Paper of the European Commission advocates that all students at school should learn three languages which normally would be their own national language plus two others.

> *A reflection of European identity and citizenship, plurilingualism is one of the essential elements of the society of knowledge that we are entering.*
>
> (European Commission, 1997)

The notion that English will automatically become the dominant language of this enormous, diverse and expanding community is one that many influential continentals wish to challenge.

2.3 Relevant UK research

In their specification for the present research, the Scottish Office indicated a number of possible reasons for the continuing decline in the uptake of modern languages:

- Perceptions among students that Higher examinations are difficult.
- Perceptions among teachers that Highers do not articulate well with Standard Grade.
- A view that more able students are not challenged sufficiently from S2 to S4 to enable them to pick up the challenge of Highers in S5.
- A view that the increased availability of SCOTVEC modules encourages students to take a new language in them rather than continue with an existing language to Higher level.
- A view that school policies on the viability of small class sizes militates against small sections.
- A view that the above issue is exacerbated by the existence of a school policy on all through (S1-S6) diversification of languages.
- A view that schools and in particular guidance staff do not value modern languages, are not fully aware of their relevance and therefore do not encourage students to opt for them.

- A view that institutes of Higher Education do not require a modern language qualification at more advanced levels of learning for non-language students.
- A view that society does not value fully enough the need for modern languages.

In asking the research team to investigate these and other possible reasons, they indicated the prior importance of exploring students' views and specified that the research should seek to identify the main factors influencing students.

Research on drop-out from languages

There is only one research study of drop-out from languages that is directly relevant to our concerns. In his investigation of 200 'drop-outs' from languages post-GCSE in England, Aplin (1991) identified a number of reasons, including: dislike of activities that were not enjoyable or practical; more immediate appeal of other subjects; erroneous notions transmitted about modern languages and careers; negative reactions to low test marks; a disturbing level of perception of not being valued by teachers; lack of contact with a modern country.

Research on language anxiety and related affective factors

In their study of progression in language learning from GCSE to A-level, Graham and Powell (1992) focused particularly on students' perceptions of their difficulties and anxieties. They found that most concerns arose from the need for linguistic accuracy, from frustration at not being able to use their limited vocabulary to express ideas fully in written and spoken forms, and from difficulties in reading and listening comprehension at the required level. Female students appeared to express more concern about written accuracy than did their male counterparts and to be more conscious of having to look up large numbers of words when reading. This suggested to the researchers that female students were experiencing a higher level of language anxiety.

Further insight into language anxiety is provided by Coleman (1996) who conducted a large-scale survey of language learners in the UK and elsewhere in Europe, mainly consisting of students at university but also drawing on some who were in the upper secondary school in England. He found that language anxiety was highest in the 17 year-olds and declined to age 21. At the other end of the age-range, Low, Duffield, Brown and Johnstone (1993), in their research on modern languages at primary school within the national pilot projects, found that 8 year-olds showed no trace of language anxiety but that 11 year-olds were beginning to do so, though not at this stage to an extent that was dysfunctional.

These research findings seem to confirm a widely-held common-sense view that adolescence can be a problematical period for language-learning. This does not lead to the conclusion that adolescents should not learn languages, since many do, and very successfully. It does, however, point to language anxiety as a possible factor that will require careful consideration in our own research so that we may eventually formulate recommendations on how it may be taken into account in teaching modern languages to adolescents in Scotland.

Other studies on modern languages in Scotland

Two studies in Scotland provide prior information that is useful to our own research. In her investigation of student motivation in two local authorities, mainly in relation to their previous experience of compulsory study of a modern languages in the core curriculum of S1-S4, Kent (1998) found that students felt far more strongly about de-motivation than they did about motivation. Among the de-motivating factors indicated by the students were: too many worksheets, reflecting a task-based approach to teaching mixed-ability classes; reliance on worksheets rather than textbooks causing a problem for revision; mixed motivation arising from being in the same S4 cohort as students who (because of 'languages for all') didn't really care whether they did well or not, since they were going to leave school anyway; teachers having to expend too much effort in catering for the poorly motivated and poor-performing; a perception that doing well at Higher was more difficult in modern languages than in other subjects; a bigger gap between Standard Grade and Higher in modern languages than in other subjects; the content of the Standard Grade courses perceived as intellectually humiliating and lacking stimulation; being in composite classes; being in classes where the teaching was shared, with difficulties in articulating lesson content.

A feature of the above study is that it gives expression to the students' voice. Although it was small-scale and did not have the resources to be complemented by classroom observation or by data from teachers or school management, it alerts us to a number of issues, particularly in relation to de-motivation, that merit further exploration in our own investigation.

In their study of the teaching of French at S1-S2 in three Glasgow schools, O'Reilly-Cavani and Birks (1997) were able to adopt a multifaceted approach involving questionnaires, interviews with students, discussions with teachers and the observation of classroom lessons. The classroom observations revealed a picture of large classes and a lack of books. Teaching practices varied greatly and there appeared to be very little time available for highlighting the importance of language-learning. The questionnaires showed that student attitudes to learning French tended to deteriorate as they progressed from S1 to S4. Boys were generally more negative than girls. While recognising the general usefulness of learning a modern language, most students thought that European businesses used English as their main language of business transactions. There was a markedly positive attitude to using the new technologies, especially videos and IT, and a high proportion expressed an interest in learning Spanish or Italian. The discussions with students revealed that, while most of them had a generally positive attitude towards France as a country, they were generally very ignorant about it. Their attitude to French classes was generally though not exclusively negative. Early language learning in the form of a modern language at primary school did not necessarily provide a more positive attitude at secondary. Most students, while recognising the general relevance of learning French, did not consider it particularly useful for them personally. A powerful force behind student de-motivation was peer-group pressure. More generally, the researchers found that Scottish employers viewed modern language skills as more important than did the

Scottish public. No French textbook at S1-S2 appeared to be well-adapted to the needs of students and teachers and school management tended to understate the importance of languages.

A feature of the above study is that it uses a variety of data-collection techniques in order to create a composite picture. Like the other Scottish study that has already been mentioned, it was small-scale and the researchers make no claims concerning the generalizability of their findings. Nonetheless this study is of relevance to our present research in that it alerts us to issues affecting French (by far the dominant modern language in Scottish schools) and to what is happening or not happening in the first two years of secondary within one given context. These two years have traditionally been the starting-point for learning a modern language in Scottish schools but now their role is different in that they are required to provide continuity of experience and progression in learning, thereby allowing students to build on their primary school experience.

Research on radical alternatives to the existing curricular framework

Scotland's major modern languages innovation in recent years has been the extension of compulsory provision from S1-S2 to P6-S4. Elsewhere, other forms of innovation have been attempted, in particular what is often termed 'content instruction' or the teaching of other subject-matter through the medium of a foreign language. This approach is being adopted on an increasing scale in several European countries where there is dissatisfaction with what can be achieved through simply teaching a foreign language as a school subject. In Germany for example there were by 1993 (Kästner, 1993) over 140 secondary schools in which important subject-matter was being taught in this way. The foreign language was by no means restricted to English, since in 57 of the schools it was French, and in others it was Spanish, Dutch, Italian, Russian or Portuguese. The pattern is not one of total immersion in the foreign language but rather one in which certain subjects in whole or in part are taught via the foreign language while others are taught in the students' native language. Similar developments are now taking place in England. Estebanez and Feltham (1993) for example report on the teaching of Business Studies through the medium of Spanish to GCSE level in a comprehensive school, and elsewhere in England History has been taught through French. The students taking their Business Studies to GCSE level through Spanish were reported as responding positively to the intellectual and linguistic challenge.

We consider that innovation and research of this sort should be borne in mind when considering modern languages in Scotland. Our present research has necessarily been obliged to gather its data from students, teachers and others who are familiar with the existing curricular framework and who cannot be expected to know about alternatives such as 'content instruction'. We certainly hope that our findings pertaining to perceptions within the current curricular framework will prove helpful but we also believe that in considering future possibilities it may prove advantageous to consider going well beyond the current framework in order to explore the possibilities of 'content instruction'. The gains in students'

motivation, cognitive capability and language proficiency appear to be considerable.

2.4 International research on attitudes and motivation for languages

In general research within education, psychology and linguistics the terms 'attitudes' and 'motivation' have been defined in many different ways and it is not our intention to explore this diversity in detail. It will suffice for us to indicate that:

- **Attitudes** tend to refer to objects - hence in our case Scottish students may have positive or other attitudes to modern-language learning, to a particular language, to their teachers, to their course syllabuses and materials, to the careers advice they receive and to many other relevant things besides.
- **Motivation** tends to refer to action - hence Scottish students may be motivated (or otherwise) to perform actions such as (for example) learning a particular modern language, mixing with speakers of that language, travelling abroad, listening to, speaking, reading or writing the language, seeking employment in which their language may be used.

Integrative and instrumental orientations

For most of the past 25 years international research on language-related attitudes and motivation has largely reflected a social-psychological perspective, with a lead given by Canadian researchers, in particular Gardner (1985). On the basis of empirical research of a high quality, Gardner and colleagues have developed a view that social attitudes influence the ways and the extent to which students are motivated to learn another language and that their motivation correlates positively with their eventual achievement in learning the language. In particular, two key constructs have been identified which Gardner describes as 'integrativeness' and 'instrumentality'. Students may have an instrumental or an integrative orientation towards another language which motivates them to learn it:

- The **integrative orientation** motivates learners to learn another language in order to identify closely with the other language's speakers and cultures.
- The **instrumental orientation** on the other hand motivates them to learn another language for more utilitarian purposes such as gaining a good exam grade or gaining entry to the next level of education or adding to one's CV or selling more goods abroad.

These orientations may possibly reflect the society in which an individual lives. In Canada therefore it is to be expected that many English-speaking Canadians will experience an integrative orientation for learning French, since French is one of the country's national languages and they wish to be close to the thoughts and values of the French-speaking community, thereby helping Canada to remain one integrated nation. In many countries of the Pacific rim, however, the orientation to learn English as a modern language tends to be much more instrumental, since English there has become a major language of business transactions.

In our own research it has been important to establish the extent to which these two orientations figure in the thoughts, feelings and actions of Scottish students at school. Clearly, they cannot be there in any strong form, otherwise the uptake in modern languages at Higher would not have declined so dramatically. On the other hand, they may be there but obstructed by a number of intervening factors that we have sought to identify, in which case it might prove possible to clear the obstructions so as to allow these orientations more scope for development. At this point in our text we are making no claims that this is so, but it is a possibility which arises from our discussion of these two important constructs.

More recent research: the classroom focus

Valuable though the research on integrative and instrumental orientations has been, there is little or no evidence to suggest that either of these two social-psychological constructs is at present strongly prevalent in Scottish society. If therefore there were nothing more to language-related attitudes and motivation than these two constructs, the prospects for modern languages in Scotland would not be rosy. In this sense, the findings of a Hungarian teacher-researcher are relevant. Nikolov (1998) investigated the motivation of students learning English as a modern language at school in Hungary across three age-ranges: 6-8, 8-11 and 11-14. She found that '..... the most motivating factors for children between 6 and 14 years of age included positive attitudes towards the learning context and the teacher, intrinsically motivating activities, tasks and materials. They were more motivated by classroom practice than by integrative or instrumental reasons ..... Instrumental motives here emerged around the age of 11-12 but they remained vague and general. No trace of attitudes towards speakers of the target language was identified in the answers to the open questions' (Nikolov, 1998: 49).

In keeping with this insight, there has recently been a new wave of research on attitudes and motivations for languages that has not sought to deny the importance of the social-psychological perspective but which has argued that there are other motivating factors which must be taken into account. As one of the leading protagonists of the new wave puts it: 'The main focus has shifted from social attitudes to looking at classroom reality, and identifying and analysing classroom-specific motives.' (Dörnyei, 1998: 125). He claims in fact that 'until the mid-1990s there were absolutely no attempts to design motivational strategies for classroom application' (Dörnyei, 1998: 130). However, drawing on educational psychology in a broad sense, various researchers (eg Dörnyei, 1994, 1998; Oxford and Sheerin, 1994; Crookes and Schmidt, 1994) have recently identified and exemplified a range of motivational constructs that focus on the characteristics of individual learners and groups in the classroom context. A sample of these will now briefly be discussed and exemplified in relation to what our own research study in Scotland might aim to investigate:

Expectancy and value

This refers to 'an individual's expectancy of success on a given task and the value the individual attaches to success in that task' (Dörnyei, 1998: 118). To what

extent then do Scottish students expect to succeed in what their modern languages teachers ask them to do? Of those who do expect to succeed, what value to they attach to this? Might we for example find students who expect to well at Standard Grade but who find the intellectual challenge of Standard Grade to be humiliatingly low, as one of the previously quoted studies suggests? Alternatively, might we find that some students do not expect to succeed in their modern language, having acquired what the new researchers call 'learned helplessness'?

Attributions

This construct has to do with how students explain their past successes or failures. If they feel they are not making the progress that they would like to make, to what do they attribute this? Their own lack of aptitude? The quality of teaching? Excessive pressure from parents and teachers for obtaining a good grade? Obviously, there could be many different possible attributions that would vary considerably from one individual student to another, and it would be helpful if in our research we could identify any commonly recurring attributions because these might prove to be a basis for developing attempts to make things better.

Self-efficacy, self-esteem, self-worth, linguistic confidence

It has already been suggested from other research that language anxiety can have an adverse affect on adolescents in their learning of another language. To what extent then were we likely to find that students at school in Scotland were positive about their language abilities and able to maintain their self-esteem? There might for example be some students who expected to succeed in their language tasks and who valued this (see expectancy-value above) but whose self-esteem and linguistic confidence were nonetheless not high because they felt they suffered badly in comparison with their peers from France, Germany, Spain or Italy whose modern-language competence was perceived as being much higher than theirs. There could be many factors that affect a Scottish student's linguistic confidence, some of which are explored in our research.

Goal-setting and perseverance

Dörnyei cites two general researchers in education, Locke and Kristoff (1996), who analyse some 400 studies which claim to show unambiguously that '..... goals that are both specific and difficult lead to higher performance than do vague goals or goals that are specific and easy.' (Dörnyei, 1998: 120). This incidentally provides an empirical research justification of one of the central pillars of the Scottish Office document 'How good is our school?' We might then ask to what extent Scottish students, their teachers and school senior management are really clear about the goals of modern languages in Scottish schools. Is it generally the case, for example, that specific and difficult goals are set, or do they tend to be vaguely defined? Moreover, to what extent do teachers and students work towards these goals? Learning another language to a truly functional level of proficiency in the Scottish context is akin to seeking the Holy Grail, an apparently never-ending quest. Do schools therefore set clear intermediate goals for their language-learning

students? Do they encourage the qualities of perseverance that are undoubtedly required in order to achieve these?

An indication of the potentially wide variety of motivational impulses for learning another language that reflect individual learner characteristics is provided in a study by Oxford and Sheerin (1994). Their research on high school learners of Japanese in the United States showed that more than two-thirds of the students had additional reasons beyond integrativeness or instrumentality such as: intellectual stimulation, seeking a personal challenge, enjoying the elitism of taking a difficult language, showing off to friends, developing a greater cultural tolerance, having a code that parents would not know, satisfying curiosity about cultural secrets, pursuing a fascination with Japanese writing systems. It may be noted that not all of these reasons are necessarily totally worthy, but our task for the present must be to ascertain what is and is not motivating for students rather than what ought to be.

2.5 Implications for our own research design

As required by the Scottish Office specification, our main source of data has been students themselves at school, but we have also collected data, though to a lesser degree, from modern languages teachers, guidance teachers, time-tablers, headteachers, parents and the business community.

As a framework for our research we draw on the framework set out by Dörnyei (1994), adapting this considerably to suit our own purposes. This framework operates at three levels:

- **The language level**, whereby students' perceptions of language-learning and particular languages are gauged. This enables us to ascertain the extent to which integrative and instrumental orientations are discernible in Scottish students at school. It also provides information on the extent to which Scottish students actually use a modern language out of school as well as learn it at school.
- **The learning situation level**, which focuses on students' perceptions of school factors such as teachers and teaching, curriculum, syllabus, classroom activities, class organisation, timetable, guidance, support from senior staff, impact of national and local policies and provision, impact of the ethos and management of the school.
- **The learner level**, which allows us to explore some if not all of the more personal characteristics associated with individual language learners in class, such as anxiety, self-confidence, goal-setting, attributions, and peer-group norms and pressures.

By adopting a framework such as the above, we are able to draw on constructs that have been tried and tested in research on the language level over several years but also to include aspects of the more recent, more practical and pragmatic research approach featuring the levels of the learning situation and the learner.

2.6 Difficulties inherent in investigating attitudes and motivation

In concluding the present chapter, we hope it will have become apparent that we are dealing with very complex matters, ranging from what students may superficially like or dislike about the ways in which they are taught languages to their personal value systems, their underlying aspirations and anxieties and their sense of personal identity. As another of the new wave of motivational researchers puts it:

> *The learning of a foreign language involves far more than simply learning skills, or a system of rules, or a grammar; it involves an alteration of self-image, the addition of new social and cultural behaviours and ways of being, and therefore has a significant impact on the social nature of the learner.*
>
> (Williams, 1994: 77)

If this is so, then we might ask to what extent will adolescent students at school in Scotland accept or reject the alteration of self that is implied? To what extent do the ethos and management of their school, the advice of their guidance teachers and the practices of their languages teachers help them to understand and manage this process of alteration?

There are a number of problems in investigating attitudes and these other subjective factors. For example:

- Some respondents may not be consistent in what they say. Attitudes have cognitive components ('I think that ...'), affective components ('This is what I feel about it ...') and behavioural components ('This is what I do and why I think I do it ...'). It is not necessarily the case that these three components are always in harmony with each other. We may think X, feel Y and act Z in relation to the same attitude object, whether this is smoking cigarettes, jogging or learning another language. We may for example have an intellectual appreciation of the value of learning another language but personally deep down feel ambivalent about it and in fact do little or nothing about learning or using it.

- Some respondents may not be fully aware of the attitudes they hold or of what deep down really motivates or de-motivates them. They may for example not be aware of traces of prejudice, bias, stereotyping or ethnocentrism within themselves. They may therefore find discussion within a peer-group either helpful, because it enables them to unpack their own thoughts and feelings, or unhelpful because it threatens their currently perceived sense of self or because it creates a bandwagon effect whereby they latch on to the thoughts and feelings of others rather than explore and express their own.
- Some respondents may be well aware of their attitudes but may not wish to be fully explicit about them and may in fact seek to disguise them. A headteacher for example may not be totally persuaded of the value of 'languages for all' but may not wish to declare this to a research team. Or a student may secretly be quite keen on languages but may seek to disguise this in group discussion because of peer pressure to appear anti-languages.

As we conduct our investigation we are certainly not seeking to 'catch' our respondents 'out' but we cannot always take their statements at their face value. We have to collect data systematically from a variety of sources, both group and individual, and to check one account or one response carefully against another in order to ascertain which factors come through consistently and which ones appear subject to variation. In the next chapters, as we move beyond the facts and figures of uptake and the existing research literature, we discuss our own research approach in greater detail.

2.7 Summary

In this chapter we have:

- identified two key characteristics of the Scottish context for learning and using a modern language: the limited amount of exposure that students receive to that language out of school and the lack of a shared motivation within our society. In these two aspects, Scotland is different from many countries elsewhere in Europe
- outlined the findings of the small number of relevant research studies in the UK which point to a wide range of specific factors rather than to a smaller number of more general factors which may be having a negative influence on modern languages teaching at school and pointed to research elsewhere that has focused on teaching other subjects at secondary school through the medium of a foreign language
- set out the two social-psychological constructs that have widely adopted in conventional research as language-related attitudes and motivations: integrativeness and instrumentality
- explored how more recent international research has focused much more on learner characteristics within the classroom context, identifying factors such as 'expectancy and value', 'attributions', 'self-efficacy, self-esteem, self-worth, self-confidence' and 'goal setting and perseverance' as being potentially relevant to language related research on attitudes and motivation
- developed a 3-level framework for our investigation, deriving in part from the conventional and more recent research: the language level, the learning situation level and the learner level
- and pointed to a number of difficulties that researchers must confront when investigating attitudes and motivation.

3: Perceptions of the impact of national policies on uptake at Higher

3.1 Introduction

This chapter and the three which follow discuss the findings from our own research, conducted between the autumn of 1996 and the spring of 1998. A summary of the methods used to collect the data is included as Appendix A-1, which is followed by group and individual interview schedules used in the preliminary phase of the research (Appendices A-2 to A-7). The survey instruments, including response frequencies, are also included as Appendices B1-6. Chapters 3, 4 and 5 discuss our findings in relation to the two main groups of explanations put forward at the outset of the research, or emerging from the preliminary phase, to explain the decline in uptake of modern languages at Higher. These were:

- explanations relating to the language learning context within schools (divided into 'external' influences, discussed in this chapter, and 'internal' influences, discussed in chapter 4).
- explanations relating to learner attitudes and motivation (discussed in chapter 5).

In chapter 6, we look at strategies schools have used to try to combat the decline in uptake.

There are two main influences on the language learning context within schools: firstly, what might be termed the 'national structure' for language learning from primary school to S4, including the principal policy thrusts of recent years, such as *Modern Languages in the Primary School, Languages For All, 5–14,* the move towards linguistic diversification and the devising and revision of Standard Grade and Higher examinations; and secondly, conditions within each secondary school, including the curriculum and the teaching methods adopted, the resources available for teaching languages, mixed ability teaching/setting, class size, school policies in relation to options and choices, timetabling, the nature of guidance and the school 'ethos' in relation to modern languages.

We refer to these as *external* and *internal* influences. It was clear from both the case-study and survey data of student opinions, that students themselves were generally not in a position to distinguish between external and internal factors influencing their experience of modern language learning in school. This was not the case for principal teachers of modern languages or for headteachers, who at both stages of the research tended to focus more strongly on external rather than internal causes for the decline in uptake.

In this chapter, we look at the impact of these external influences on the language learning context, reviewing first the hypotheses put forward at the start of the study, and then reporting the findings from our research. (We should emphasise that we are not using the term 'hypotheses' in a strictly scientific sense as being derived by ourselves as researchers from prior evidence and then

systematically tested but rather in the sense of 'possible explanations' that had been expressed by various individuals and groups at the time our research was getting underway.)

3.2 Hypotheses relating to external influences

Before the research began, it was hypothesised that external influences had a significant role to play in the decline of uptake of Higher modern languages. Modern language teaching had been affected by a number of policy developments in a relatively short period of time. Each of these focused on different aspects of the national 'structure', but it was also clear that they were connected to each other in various, not always explicit ways. Table 3.1 lists the various developments, their aims and their effects (some of which may not have been intentional).

Table 3.1: Policy developments relating to modern languages 1987-1998

Policy	Aims	Effects
Languages for All (LfA) (rolling programme of introduction to schools from 1989 onwards - ongoing)	To establish modern languages as a 'core' subject, like English and maths, making four years of modern language study compulsory for all secondary students.	Modern languages departments had to adjust to a larger number of S3 and S4 students taking languages: this raised issues about mixed ability teaching/ setting and the need to make provision for the full ability range.
Modern languages in the Primary School (MLPS) (piloted 1989; introduced to schools 1994)	To start modern language learning at an earlier age (ie in P6), thereby increasing the length of time for compulsory language learning from four to six years.	Changes to modern languages courses in S1 and S2, as secondary teachers no longer working with beginners. Problems for the maintenance of language diversification (see below) as associated primaries' choice of language and balance of provision might not coincide with the balance of provision available at secondary level.
Language diversification (Government commitment stated in Circular 1178, in 1989)	To promote the teaching of a wider range of modern languages in secondary schools	• Diversification has been welcomed by most teachers. • In some cases, has been hard to sustain as a result of MLPS (where decisions about the languages students take have to be made in conjunction with associated primary schools). • LfA may also have constrained diversification because the greater numbers of students in S3 and S4 may have stretched resources and restricted choice for some.
5–14 curriculum guidelines (first announced 1987; introduced in schools 1991)	To establish curriculum guidelines for all subject areas for children from age 5 to age 14 and promote continuity between primary and secondary education.	Guidelines for modern languages refer only to ages 12 to 14 and have yet to be revised to reflect MLPS developments; they do not therefore currently relate to continuity between primary and secondary language provision.
Standard Grade examinations (introduced for French in 1988; other languages followed)	To enable students of all abilities to achieve qualifications reflecting their attainment level.	Focus on oral skills in modern languages, with an optional writing paper at both General and Credit levels: as this contrasts with the emphasis in Higher modern languages exams, it has been argued that the gap between the two examinations is a major factor in the decline of uptake.
Revised Higher examinations (introduced for French in 1990; other languages followed)	To make content more accessible and relevant	Still perceived by modern languages teachers to be a particularly difficult examination, in part because of the different 'philosophies' underlying Standard Grade and Higher.

Each of these initiatives introduced changes to the system to which some of the problems with uptake at Higher might be attributed. Criticism focused on LfA and the relationship between Standard Grade and Higher examinations. LfA had considerably increased the numbers of students taking modern languages in S3 and S4 but meant a change in teaching approaches, as many of these students were felt to be lacking in enthusiasm and ability: as a consequence, it was postulated that keener language learners might receive less attention or become demotivated as part of a wider 'malaise' among S3 and S4 students about language learning, because it was compulsory.

Standard Grade and Higher were also seen as problematic for a number of reasons. The emphasis on oral skills in the Standard Grade examination was seen as excessive by some teachers, because the balance of skills was felt to be inappropriate, because some students who were competent in relation to other aspects of language learning were unwilling to 'perform in public' as the continuous assessment of speaking skills required, and because of the practical difficulties of focusing on oral skills (necessitating a considerable amount of one-to-one and small group teaching and thereby reducing the time available for whole-class teaching and direct supervision of work undertaken independently).The relationship between Standard Grade and Higher was cited by many as the principal reason for the decline in uptake of modern languages at Higher. While Standard Grade focused on communicative skills, Higher took a broader view of language learning which included much greater expertise in relation to grammar, as well as a substantial writing element. Teachers argued that it was extremely difficult to cover the grammatical and written language elements needed in the two terms between the Standard Grade and Higher exams, and many were frustrated that solutions they saw to this problem - either to make the Higher a two year course, or to introduce more grammar and written skills at an earlier stage - seemed impractical because of their unpopularity with students and some parents.

In addition to these issues relating to specific initiatives, it was also a possibility that frequent policy changes in a short period of time had had a destabilising effect on the subject, and that, as the various initiatives were not developed in concert with each other, some aspects could be working against others. If so, these factors might also, indirectly, affect the decline in uptake at Higher.

3.3 Overview of the findings

In the following sections, we look principally at teachers', students' and parents' views on the external influences which appeared at the outset of the research and from our preliminary work in 'case study' schools to be the most critical in determining whether students would decide to take Highers in modern languages. These were the impact of *Languages for All*, the Standard Grade course, and the relationship between Standard Grade and Higher. In each case, we found that teachers were more aware of the possible impact of these external influences than students or parents, partly because of teachers' greater experience, and partly because, for understandable reasons, teachers may prefer to see their difficulties as

externally created, while students may be disposed to be critical of teachers (and thus to identify internal rather than external factors as the cause of any negative experiences they have undergone).

In general terms, there is a high level of general dissatisfaction among principal teachers with the external factors affecting the context of the modern language classroom. It was also clear from responses to the survey questions about departmental development plans that much of their time is given over to implementing and dealing with the effects of national policy and examination requirements. This contrasted to some extent with their assessment of their own development needs - and those of their departmental colleagues - which tended more towards effective classroom skills, time and staff management, maintaining teacher language skills and fluency, developing strategies for motivating students and for differentiating needs and learning IT skills.

On a technical note, it should be borne in mind that all survey data describing participants' attitudes to particular issues was collected using a five point scale, whereby respondents were invited to say whether they strongly agreed, agreed, neither agreed nor disagreed, disagreed, or strongly disagreed with a range of statements, which were phrased positively in some cases and negatively in others. Where we report that respondents agreed with a particular statement, this generally reflects the combination of those who indicated that they strongly agreed and those who agreed. Similarly, those reported as disagreeing usually include both those who disagreed and those who strongly disagreed. Separate reference to strong agreement or disagreement is included where relevant.

3.4 'Languages for All'

The views of teachers, on the one hand, and students and their parents, on the other, on the importance of making languages compulsory to the end of S4 were at variance. Almost two thirds (63%) of our student sample thought that languages should be compulsory up to S4, and over three quarters (76%) of parents thought that it was very important that all students should study a language up to the end of S4. However, only 34% of principal teachers felt it was very important and 25% quite important, but 39% said it was not important. Over a third (37%) of the teachers said their views had changed since the introduction of the *Languages for All* policy: in almost all cases, this meant that they had originally believed that languages should be compulsory to the end of S4, but now no longer held this view.

Teachers were, of course, more aware of the practical difficulties of implementing the policy than students or parents, who were commenting on the principle. Teachers felt that for students with learning or motivational difficulties, a modern language was not necessarily appropriate. In practice, almost three quarters (71%) of the teachers surveyed said that some of their S4 students would not be taking Standard Grade in a modern language that year. Most were students with some kind of learning difficulty and in 50% of the schools concerned, the students had not followed any kind of modern language course in S3/S4.

There was greater consensus on the question of whether languages should be compulsory in S5. Only 10% of our student sample supported this proposal, and teachers were similarly unenthusiastic: over three quarters were against such a move on the grounds that many students would not be capable and that compulsion puts students off. Of the minority in favour of such a move, parity with other European countries was quoted as a justification as were potential social, economic and cultural benefits. The majority of parents (58%) were also opposed to compulsion in S5, both on the grounds of the principle of choice, and because they felt that the S5 course would be too daunting or difficult for many students. However, a substantial minority (38%) of the parents interviewed would have been happy to see some form of compulsory modern language learning in S5, citing increased mobility in Europe, the need to overcome insularity and parochialism, the support this would give their children in meeting their career aspirations and the value for travel purposes as reasons why they would support such a move.

It seems clear that those who support the notion of 'languages for all' do so because of the advantages they believe this would bring to students at a later stage in life, or for reasons of principle, while those who oppose it do so primarily on pragmatic grounds. The extent to which the implementation of *Languages for All* has influenced students' choices of subjects to take to Higher cannot really be gauged simply by asking this question, however. Students, as we noted earlier, found it difficult to distinguish the effects of external and internal factors on their experiences in S3 and S4 and thus we have to infer the possible effects of *Languages for All* on their decisions about Higher in relation to their views on their experiences of the S3 and S4 course (discussed below).

3.5 Standard Grade and Higher

From the point of view of principal teachers of modern languages, it is the nature of Standard Grade which creates the most serious problems in relation to subsequent uptake of modern languages at Higher. The majority (83%) of the principal teachers surveyed felt that S4 students had been put off modern languages to a greater or lesser extent by their Standard Grade course. Dissatisfaction focused on the emphasis on speaking at Standard Grade, which over half the sample (54%) felt was inappropriate. In open-ended questions, this issue was the most frequently raised, with a number of teachers voicing their opposition to half of the exam marks being given to speaking, and others claiming that the speaking element had adverse effects of some kind on the students. Other areas of criticism included:

- the unpredictability of the topics chosen for the reading paper (slated by 82% of the sample)
- the need to gear class teaching to the specific assessment requirements of the exam (acknowledged by 78% of the principal teachers surveyed)
- the need for a prescribed vocabulary list for Standard Grade (supported by 68% of the sample)
- the burden of the exam on the day (63% thought this was excessive)

- the view that the optional writing element should be compulsory (supported by 57% of the sample, with more teachers saying this would be appropriate for all credit students).

In addition to negative views of students' experiences of the Standard Grade course and of the examination, almost all teachers in the survey saw progression from Standard Grade to Higher as highly problematic. The majority (88%) agreed that the gap between Standard Grade and Higher is too great for students to achieve comparable success with other subjects at Higher, and most schools in the sample (84%) were operating some form of restricted access to their Higher modern language courses: in general, students needed to have attained credit level passes and credit writing at Standard Grade to sit the Higher over one year and an award at general level 3 and general writing to take a two year course to Higher.

When asked why students who are competent to take a Higher modern language decide not to do so, 85% of the teachers felt that the difficulty of the examination was of major importance and a further 9% considered it of some importance. The difficulty of the Higher examination ran as a leitmotiv throughout the open-ended responses which teachers gave to a number of questions. Approaching 70% of the teacher sample agreed that the examination itself was a marathon which put students off, but there was no clear consensus on problematic aspects of the course, such as an excessive emphasis on writing and grammar (under 30% felt this was the case) and the need for continuous assessment (under 45% agreed). Just over half the sample felt that the Higher course as it currently stands needs two years rather than one, while 29% actually felt that the revised Higher is more difficult than its more traditional predecessor.

From our survey of headteachers, it is clear that most shared the views of principal teachers of modern languages in relation to the problems with Standard Grade and Higher, although some headteachers took care to refer to 'perceived' difficulties, and one or two suggested that modern languages departments are responsible for creating these perceptions. Students and parents, however, were much less conscious of the real or supposed difficulties.

Students' views on the demands of Standard Grade and Higher were not as negative as was hypothesised. Of those who had decided not to continue languages in S5, a fifth (20%) said that this was because languages are too difficult, but other reasons (such as the view that other subjects were more attractive, or that languages were not useful for employment) were equally or more frequently cited. There was little explicit criticism of the Standard Grade course. For example, most S4 students thought that Standard Grade assessments were about right (61% of those taking one language, 67% of those taking a second language) and few thought that there is too great an emphasis on speaking (only 25% of those taking one language and 17% of those taking a second language agreed with this). Of those taking Highers in modern languages, around two thirds thought that Standard Grade had been good preparation for Higher (64% of those taking one language and 72% of those taking two).

Parents also appeared to be satisfied with the Standard Grade course. Almost all (87%) felt that their child had benefited from the Standard Grade course, citing their child's enjoyment of the course, the level of competence attained, their child's motivation and the quality of the teaching, among other reasons. Lack of enjoyment of the course was the principal reason given for dissatisfaction.

Parents were also asked how well they thought their child could speak the modern language they had learned at Standard Grade. Over half (53%) felt that their child could speak the language fluently or quite fluently, although several parents qualified this by adding that their child lacked confidence or grammatical accuracy or was too dependent on a dictionary. A further 38% said their child had basic communication skills and could cope in limited situations and only 7% said that their child could not use the modern language at all.

Those parents whose children had chosen not to take Highers in modern languages explained that their child's educational or career goals required them to take Highers in other subjects, or simply that their child preferred other subjects to languages. Only 9% said that their child had decided not to continue because s/he had not enjoyed the Standard Grade course. Of those whose children had decided to take Highers in modern languages only one parent expressed concern based on the view that the gap between Standard Grade and Higher was too great and that her daughter was therefore taking a risk in taking a subject in which she might be awarded a poor grade.

It is difficult to weigh teachers' negative views of the Standard Grade exam and of the problematic relationship between Standard Grade and Higher against the seeming lack of concern expressed by students and parents in this regard. Clearly, teachers have experiences both of the day-to-day difficulties of preparing students for Standard Grade and Higher, and of large number of students preparing for the exam, year after year. Students and parents base their views on much more limited exposure to the two examinations. It certainly seems as though students do not consciously reject Higher on the basis of negative experiences which they attribute to Standard Grade. Nor do they seem to be as aware as was hypothesised of the gap between Standard Grade and Higher. (In our preliminary 'case study' interviews, students told us that they were aware of the gap but that they did not regard this as a greater problem for modern languages than for other subjects.) Nevertheless, it may be the case that students' experiences are negative, but that they attribute this to other factors (such as poor teaching or their own inability to learn a modern language). We explore these issues in more detail in the chapters on internal factors and on learners' motivation below.

3.6 Summary

1. At the outset of the research it was hypothesised that the effects of various new initiatives and changes in policy relating to modern languages would have had direct and indirect effects on the uptake of modern languages at Higher. Aspects of the policy context thought most likely to have a negative impact on uptake were *Languages for All*, and learners' experiences of Standard Grade and of progression from Standard Grade to Higher.

2. Our data show, however, that while principal teachers believe these factors to have had a negative impact, and that headteachers support principal teachers' views to some extent, parents and students were less aware of or concerned about the effects of Languages for All, the Standard Grade course or the relationship between Standard Grade and Higher.
3. To some extent, these differences may be attributed to differences of perspective. Teachers are in a better position to see long-term changes and global effects, students and parents the immediate context. It is quite possible that parents and students attribute problems to within school factors while teachers see these as a consequence of national policies. What our evidence does suggest strongly is that teachers and students are not sufficiently aware of how the other party perceives the situation.

4: Perceptions of the impact of school policies and practice on uptake at Higher

4.1 Introduction

Internal factors, as noted in the previous chapter, relate to the particular circumstances in which modern languages departments find themselves working, varying from school to school. They include the curriculum as it is interpreted within schools, the teaching methods adopted, the resources available for teaching languages, mixed ability teaching/setting, class size, school policies on options and choices, timetabling, the nature of guidance and the school 'ethos' in relation to modern languages. There has been widespread criticism (in the educational media in particular) of the modern languages curriculum and of teaching methods used. Teachers have also been critical of some of the strategies they feel forced to adopt and also of the effects of what some perceive to be a lack of commitment to languages within schools, leading to timetabling constraints and limited resources. In this chapter, we look first at the main hypotheses put forward at the start of the research in relation to the effects of internal factors on student uptake of modern languages at Higher, and then report the findings of the research.

4.2 Hypotheses relating to internal influences

A number of explanations were put forward to explain the decline in uptake of modern languages at Higher in relation to these internal factors. The main hypotheses are listed below:

(A) Students come to dislike modern languages, particularly in S3-4 because:

(a) the curriculum, particularly at S3 and S4 is limited because of the emphasis on oral skills in Standard Grade; in particular, students dislike the emphasis on 'self' which this tends to entail, while also rejecting work on grammar and written skills because these are widely considered to be unnecessary for Standard Grade;

(b) teaching methods are similarly limited by the unbalanced curriculum, the teacher-guided approach, the need for students to work for long periods without active supervision (all consequences of the emphasis on speaking skills at Standard Grade and the need for teachers to spend considerable amounts of time rehearsing talks or dialogues and assessing them);

(c) resources are not appropriate (because most course books are based on the English National Curriculum) and teachers often use a range of text books and school-produced materials which make it difficult for students to have a coherent reference source; despite the decision to make modern languages a 'core' subject, resources within schools may not have increased;

(d) mixed ability teaching at S3 and S4 fails to 'stretch' competent linguists or to 'protect' them from the effects of others' demotivation; while setting may be limited by timetabling factors.

(B) Students are blocked from taking Highers in modern languages because:

(a) policies in relation to options and choices may restrict access to Higher courses to students with exceptionally good Standard Grade results (as a consequence of the fact that teachers believe it is extremely difficult for students to bridge the gap between Standard Grade and Higher in two terms), thus reducing uptake;

(b) timetabling practices pit modern languages against popular subjects such as the sciences, IT or business-related subjects, forcing students to choose between them.

(C) Students are discouraged from taking Highers in modern languages because:

a) guidance teachers and other sources of advice for students making their choices for Higher do not emphasise sufficiently the value of modern languages for higher education or employment;

b) more generally, the 'decline' has a momentum of its own: the fewer students who take Highers in modern languages, the fewer subsequently wish to do so, as it becomes 'unfashionable'.

4.3 Overview of the findings

In discussing findings relating to factors operating within schools, it is important to bear in mind the limits of this research. Classroom observation could not be included in the study, nor could we make a systematic study of schools' approaches to options and choices at S2 and S4 or of timetabling practices. We rely on the reports of the teachers and students who took part in our survey, with some elaboration of the impact of the various factors gained from our preliminary interviews in the 12 'case study' schools. Where teachers and students report quite different perceptions of what is happening in the classroom (in particular in relation to the curriculum and to teaching methods) we have no way of 'triangulating' their accounts. It is also important to bear in mind that the teachers who took part in the survey were reflecting on their experiences of teaching the full ability range while the students were drawn only from those in S4 who were about to take Credit level examinations in modern languages, or those in S5 who had done so the previous year.

Nevertheless, our findings raise important issues. If teachers perceive a wide range of internal problems (as appears to be the case) such perceptions are in themselves problematic (even if, for the sake of argument, the difficulties they face were to turn out to be no greater than those experienced by other subject departments). If the causes of their perceptions - real or imaginary - are not addressed, teachers may well convey negative feelings to their students and thus discourage them from continuing modern languages in S5.

4.4 The curriculum

It was beyond the scope of this research to collect detailed data on the curriculum from primary school to S5. As we noted in the previous chapter, however, 5–14 guidelines for modern languages do not currently provide guidance on continuity and progression from the upper primary to the lower secondary. In the context of

other work currently undertaken by the researchers to develop tests of language proficiency among P7 and S2 students, for the Assessment of Achievement Programme (AAP), we found a very wide range of course books, materials and of 'visions' of language teaching for children at this stage of their education. In contrast, modern language teaching for S3 and S4 is determined largely by the demands of the Standard Grade examination, and is therefore likely to be more uniform.

The data we have from this research relate to perceptions of the curriculum held by students and principal teachers. They show that students, from the vantage point of S4 or S5, held more positive views about their experiences as language learners in primary school and in S1 and S2 than they did in relation to S3 and S4. Dissatisfaction with the curriculum is not the only factor in their declining enthusiasm, but it is an important one. Our preliminary research suggested two aspects of the curriculum in S3 and S4 which might account for this: the 'self-oriented' content of much of the material used and the emphasis on grammar.

'Self'-oriented curriculum content

Students we interviewed were critical of the 'self'-oriented content of language teaching in S3 and S4. Their visions of themselves as modern language users were of themselves as *adults*, ie in the future rather than as teenagers now. As a result, curriculum content which focused on their teenage experiences - home, family, hobbies, school, etc. - was not perceived to be useful in the long term. In contrast, instrumental activities, such as learning to order drinks and food in a restaurant, which they said had featured in S1 and S2 but then disappeared, were seen to have long-term relevance: students would have welcomed a greater emphasis on this type of activity.

> *It was okay when you were doing practical things like ordering food, things that you might need if you went to France but then when you talk about your school, which you'll never ever do, it just gets pointless and boring.*
>
> (S4 student)

We therefore tested the hypothesis that students viewed the type of language covered in Standard Grade as artificial or irrelevant to the kinds of communication goals they would be likely to have in real encounters with native speakers of the language they were studying. The survey data are somewhat contradictory. On the one hand, less than one third of the S4 sample (31% of those commenting on their first or only foreign language, and 20% of those taking a second language) supported the view that Standard Grade does not cover what is need for real communication.

On the other hand, less than a quarter (23%) of those commenting on their first or only modern language, and around a third (34%) of those taking a second modern language in S4 agreed that they felt confident about communicating with speakers of the language.

Thus, although S4 students in our survey sample appear tolerably satisfied with the development of communicative skills in the Standard Grade course, only a small proportion of students feel confident that they themselves can communicate

with speakers of the language. We should bear in mind at this point that the group concerned are all students entered for credit level at Standard Grade, and are all, therefore judged by their teachers to be reasonably competent. The data suggest that the students are either modest or, for some reason, view themselves as poor learners. Alternatively, they may feel that the ability to communicate with speakers of the language is an advanced skill. It may be that the gap between what they are able to do and what is required for communication is what causes anxiety rather than the linguistic content of the course. This is a point to which we shall return in Chapter 5.

Grammar

The second issue which was raised in our preliminary research related to the role of grammar in the S3 and S4 curriculum. From our interviews with the principal teachers of modern languages in these schools, we were aware of different policies in relation to grammar. In some schools, the teachers said they spent relatively little time specifically on grammar, (as the demands of Standard Grade are felt to be limited in this regard). Others said that they wanted to build students' grammatical knowledge and skills from S3 (or earlier, in some cases) onwards, so that those students who wished to take Highers in modern languages would have a sound grammatical base. Our survey showed that most principal teachers (87%) have sought to make students more aware of grammar in recent times in order to support students' language learning.

In contrast to Standard Grade, the grammatical demands of Higher modern languages are felt to be high. The dilemma for teachers is that grammar work is considered unpopular with students and, if introduced in S3/4 - when it is not seen as essential to go beyond some basic concepts - might discourage more students from continuing to study modern languages in S5. However, keeping most grammatical work until students reach S5 makes for a demanding, and perhaps tedious year's work - and even so, it may be difficult to cover everything that is needed in time. One principal teacher commented in interview:

> *I think we make a lot more effort on grammar teaching than many schools do, but that does put some pupils off doing Higher, and that is why it is a double edged sword. ... We do put people off because they perceive it as hard work ... but at the same time, those who go on to take Higher are fairly well equipped and we do get a good pass rate and good grades. It works both ways.*

Our preliminary data suggested that whichever approach teachers adopted, students were critical. Where little grammar was introduced in S3 and S4, S5 students complained that it appeared too late in the course. Where more grammar was taught in S3 and S4, they complained that it was unnecessary for Standard Grade. The survey data appear to bear out these initial findings. Most of the S4 students in our survey (67% of those commenting on their first or only modern language and 65% of those taking a second language) disagreed with the statement in the questionnaire that there was too little grammar in the Standard Grade course, and, when asked to say in their own words what they disliked about learning languages, the emphasis on 'grammar' and on 'learning verbs' were the most frequently mentioned aspects. In contrast, of the S5 students who were taking

Highers in modern languages, half (50%) of those commenting on their first or only modern language *strongly* agreed (and a further 28% agreed) with the statement that they should have covered more grammar in earlier years in order to help them prepare for Higher. (For those taking two languages, the figures were 42% and 22% respectively).

Our findings suggest that the role of grammar in modern language teaching in schools needs to be explored in more depth. There is clearly a dissonance between teachers' and students' views in relation to the role of grammar in S3 and S4, and the likelihood, emerging from the teacher data, that teachers are planning to devote more time to grammar teaching in future suggests that greater resistance to modern languages may develop among students as a consequence. It may be, however, that it is not 'grammar' in itself which students find off-putting but the way in which it is taught, and that the development of new approaches would enable teachers to cover the aspects they believe are necessary without alienating students. In Chapter 5, we return to this issue when we look at learners' preferred learning styles.

4.5 Teaching methods

As with the curriculum, the data we have on teaching methods are limited. We were not able, in this study, to visit classrooms and observe teachers at work. Again, our data are limited to teachers' and students' perceptions of the efficacy and value of the methods used.

Generally speaking, approximately half of the students who participated in the survey were satisfied with the teaching methods used for modern languages throughout the first four years of secondary school. Those commenting on their first or only foreign language showed a slight drop in satisfaction in comparing S1/2 with S3/4. (56% of S4 students and 55% of S5 students found that the teaching methods adopted in S1/2 suited them, compared with 47% of S4 and 52% of S5 students who felt that the teaching methods adopted in S3/4 suited them). However, satisfaction rises markedly for those commenting on their second foreign language, in comparing the methods used in S1/2 with S3/4. (52% of S4 students and 53% of S5 students found that the teaching methods adopted in S1/2 suited them; but in commenting on the teaching methods used in S3/4, 67% of S4 and 64% of S5 students felt that the methods used were appropriate.) Clearly, those who choose to study a second modern language up to the end of S4 are those who most enjoy the subject and therefore to find the teaching approach congenial. However, the fact that approximately 50% of the full group were satisfied with teaching methods in S3/4 does in itself suggest that student views are not as negative as might have been hypothesised. As we do not have comparable data in relation to other subject areas, we cannot say whether a 50% satisfaction rate is, in fact, quite reasonable (given that school students tend to be critical of their teachers) or whether it could be improved.

In our preliminary research, teachers indicated that they were concerned about the extent to which students in S3 and S4 work without direct supervision, while the teacher is working with individuals or a small group. In part, it was felt that

students might not be receiving enough input from the teacher; in part, there was a concern to ensure that students remain on task. Some teachers introduced more whole class teaching in consequence, and the survey showed that three quarters (75%) of the teacher sample had also taken this step.

The students who were interviewed in the early stages of our research, however, perceived themselves to be particularly dependent on the teacher, partly because the lack of a clear course structure which might be provided by a single text book was absent (see the following section on resources) and partly because of the extensive use of the modern language in the classroom, which made it more difficult for students to follow the teacher's instructions and explanations. Students could become frustrated with the teacher's attempts to explain things without simply saying the English word:

> *He usually explains it in French and if you don't understand the French he says more French and makes hand signals and draws things on the board and you end up sitting there for half an hour trying to guess what he means.*
>
> (S3 student)

Some students claimed that modern language teachers talked for longer than other subject teachers, attributing this in part to the fact that students were more hesitant about interrupting in the modern language. This factor also contributed to teacher-dependency: even when students could follow what was being said, there was a tendency to 'switch off' from boredom. Yet such lapses of attention could be critical to their success: they might thus miss a vital piece of information which could be acquired in no other way. Because of the high level of dependency on the teacher, a clash of personalities between student and teacher was both more likely and more serious. This suggests strongly a need for teachers to find ways of enabling their students to develop L2 intervention/interaction strategies so that they do not simply passively accept the teacher's flood of L2 input.

Students' expectations of modern language teachers were nevertheless very high. They wanted teachers both to be strict about learning, yet also to maintain a relaxed atmosphere in the class. 'Fun and games' strategies used in S1 and S2 were recalled with nostalgia by students in S3 and S4, at which stage this approach had seemingly been abandoned.

Our data, then, suggest that students' and teachers' views on appropriate teaching methods may be somewhat at odds: while teachers feel the need to have greater control of what is happening in their classrooms, students would welcome greater independence. More detailed evidence of what is happening in modern languages classrooms, from classroom observation, would be helpful in establishing the reasons for these contrasting views.

4.6 Resources

Teaching materials

Our preliminary research showed that students were critical of the materials used to teach modern languages. From their comments, there appeared to be a dearth of suitable materials, particularly for French, and consequently teachers had adopted

an eclectic approach, using elements from a range of course books and devising their own worksheets. The consequence, from the point of view of the students, was that without a specific text book and reference materials, it was impossible to have an overview of the course, to prepare for what would be coming up, or to revise for tests and exams.

> *I don't really understand it. We learn a lot but then we go on to something else and we don't refer back, so we forget what we have learned before.*
>
> (S4 student)

Our survey data, however, suggest that most of the S4 students in our sample were relatively uncritical of the materials used in S3 and S4. (Their views on the materials used in S1 and S2 were marginally more positive.) Over half (55% of those commenting on their first or only modern language; 67% of those taking a second language) either disagreed or were non-committal about the statement that the materials used were boring, and around three quarters (73% and 78% respectively) either agreed or were neutral on the question of whether the materials were well-organised for the purposes of study and revision.

Our teacher data show a range of approaches in relation to text books. While almost all principal teachers (96%) said that their departments used a commercially produced textbook as the main source of teaching materials in S1, the proportion fell to 65% for S4 (and 22% for S5). Where a commercially produced textbook is not the main source, teachers said that they mostly used a mixture of commercially produced materials and materials produced by the department; in any case, almost all teachers (96%) said that they regularly supplemented the text book in use with departmentally produced materials or worksheets and other course materials from other sources.

The extent to which teachers make use of commercial materials was greater than had been anticipated, given the level of criticism we encountered in the preliminary stages of the research. When asked to comment on the quality and availability of teaching materials, the main points made were that materials did not cater for the Scottish exam system but that they were of a high standard.

Sources of reference are particularly important for language learners, partly because they need to memorise vocabulary, set phrases and grammatical patterns, and partly because what learners remember needs constantly to be checked. Thus the survey question put to principal teachers about the availability of course and reference materials for students to take home is important. Just over half the sample said that students were able to take materials home: the proportion rises slightly from 52% in relation to S1 and S2, 53% in S3 and 55% in S4, but contrasts with the 71% who said that S5 students had materials to take home, suggesting that the need for reference materials is seen as more pressing for Higher students than for those taking Standard Grade. The fact that almost half the students preparing for Standard Grade do not have access to course or reference materials outside the classroom would seem to be cause for concern.

Time

Given the move to 'core' subject status, it might have been expected that the time available for language teaching would have increased in recent years. Our data show that this is not the case, however. On average, teaching time is around 150-170 minutes per week (for the first language). Approximately half the teacher sample said that the amount of time available had remained the same for the first two years of secondary education over the last ten years (54% in relation to S1, 48% in relation to S2); while two thirds (66%) said this was the case for S3 and S4. A quarter (25%) said that teaching time had decreased in relation to S3 and S4, for a variety of reasons: to make room for other subjects, to bring the department into line with SCCC guidelines, or because the structure of the school day had changed. The small number of teachers whose time for teaching S3 and S4 had increased (8%) also said that this was to do with changes to the structure of the school day rather than because it was recognised that as a 'core' subject and so more time needed to be made available. Around 60% of principal teachers were dissatisfied with the teaching arrangements for S3 and S4: the time allocation was the most frequently cited reason for this.

In this context we note that Scottish students spend less time on languages than their counterparts in other European countries who also benefit not only from vastly more exposure to the language out of school but who increasingly are able to learn other subjects at school through the medium of a foreign language.

Our data thus suggest that attention to resources for modern languages teaching would be valuable. At the same time, there is no clear link between the current level of resourcing and the decline of uptake at Higher.

4.7 Mixed ability teaching/grouping and issues relating to class size

Earlier small-scale research (Kent 1997) had suggested that mixed ability classes for modern languages in S3 and S4 is contentious, both from the point of view of the more able students (who found it demotivating) and of teachers (who found it difficult to meet the full range of needs and interests within one class). This issue was rarely raised in our preliminary research however, and our survey data show that mixed ability teaching in S3 and S4 is not common (10% of the sample said that all their modern language teaching was conducted in mixed ability classes). The prevalent approach (reported by 55%) is for broad groupings such as Credit/General and General/Foundation, reflecting the Standard Grade level for which teachers expect to enter students. A further 19% set classes. It seems to be the case that those who do not group or set would like to be able to do so: 18% said that the main reason for their dissatisfaction with current arrangements for teaching modern languages in S3 and S4 is that they cannot group students.

Class sizes for students taking Standard Grade courses in a first modern language are relatively large: 43% of our sample said that they have classes averaging over 25 students. Concern about class size was raised by a fifth (20%) of our respondents as a cause for dissatisfaction with current teaching

arrangements in S3 and S4. It seems likely that classes for students taking a second modern language are smaller, however, as almost half the sample (47%) said that classes with between 10 and 15 students would be considered viable by the school (and a further 31% said that classes of 10 students or fewer would be regarded as viable).

The data suggest that it is class size rather than mixed ability teaching which may limit teachers' effectiveness in S3 and S4. If there are concerns about the lack of opportunity to 'stretch' able students or about demotivation, these may relate to the fact that potentially able and enthusiastic students will receive only limited attention because of the size of the class, in some schools.

4.8 Choices at S2

In considering student options at the end of S2, the opportunity to take two modern languages was seen by many of those who took part in our preliminary research as highly significant. It was generally held that students who have the opportunity to choose two modern languages seem to be more enthusiastic about language learning generally than those who are restricted to one, even when they do not intend to take both languages to Higher: the experience itself seems to have an effect. Some respondents suggested that teachers of a second language within a school may themselves be more motivated and enthusiastic, because they wish to see the language maintained. It is also the case that second language classes tend to be smaller and that there may therefore be a better rapport between students and teachers.

This means that maintaining the option of a second modern language may be critical - but, according to those we interviewed in the preliminary stages of our research, it is becoming increasingly difficult for schools to do this. The 'eighth column' which used to contain a second modern language option and little else is now filled with attractive 'professional' subjects such as accounting, IT, etc. and the second modern language may easily be squeezed out. An additional issue raised was 'choice of modes'. While the 'Creative and Aesthetic' mode tended not to be seen as particularly relevant to academic students in the past, there is now (it appears) an external imperative for students to take a subject in this category for Standard Grade. (Note that the SCCC has recently revised its guidelines on the Creative and Aesthetic mode). One question is whether the second modern language can be included in the Creative and Aesthetic mode. One 'case study' school decided to approach the problem from the opposite direction: they asked students to make choices without assigning them to columns, and drew up columns in the light of students' choices. The switch to this system corresponded with a rise in the uptake of modern languages in the school.

Our survey data show that most schools are able to offer students the chance to take two languages in S3 and S4. Depending on the provision available in S1 and S2, some schools (50% of the sample) allowed students to continue the language they had been studying in S1 and S2 and to start a new language in S3, while others (37%), where the second language was started earlier, allowed students to

continue with one or both of these languages. The proportion of schools in which students could not take two languages in S3 and S4 was small (11%).

However, over half (54%) of the principal teachers taking part in the survey reported dissatisfaction with option choices, largely in relation to timetabling constraints (cited by 23% of the sample). More specifically, in a small proportion of schools it is not possible for students to take two sciences and two languages (cited by 5%): this a significant problem where it occurs as students opting for two sciences are regarded by many as the most able. If, at the end of S2, the most able have to choose between sciences and languages, this will reduce the number of students in a position to go on to Highers in modern languages at a later stage.

While most students were satisfied with the choices available to them, a substantial minority (27%) said that they could not take the language(s) they wanted in S3 and S4 because of 'school rules' - ie timetabling constraints. Our data therefore suggest that limited choice at S2 is a problem in approximately a quarter of secondary schools.

A linked issue is the question of *which* language students choose to study in S3 and S4. Schools have a variety of approaches to language diversification, some spreading their S1 students across the range of languages offered in the school, others having a 'main' language in S1 and introducing the other languages available through 'taster' sessions in S2 or allowing students to choose a second language when they reach S3. (The opportunity to switch from the 'main' S1/2 language to a new language in S3 was rare, reported by 1% of the teachers.) While principal teachers support the principle of diversification, some headteachers in our preliminary research drew attention to the fact that diversification dilutes numbers, particularly when students reach S5. In one school, senior school classes with fewer than six students were not viable: if there were five students taking Higher German and five Higher French, the classes could not run, whereas ten students taking one of these languages would have been feasible. As one respondent pointed out, other subjects would not be allowed the leeway which has been given to languages:

> *The school treats languages generously in view of the numbers. If other subjects had these numbers, they would be dropped.*
>
> (Timetabler)

In order to avoid this dilution, the headteacher in this school was contemplating teaching only one language from S1 onwards.

> *It is much better to go for quality provision in developing one language than it is to cover three languages less well.*
>
> (Headteacher)

Another headteacher, commenting on a similar phenomenon in his school had decided to allow small classes to run for a period of time in order to give the teacher experience of teaching at this level and to see whether numbers increased. If they did not, however, the 'experiment' would have to come to an end. In general, it seemed that the question of whether small modern language classes can be run or not in the upper school very much depends on the attitude of the headteacher.

Our data on option choices at S2 thus suggest that there may be an indirect link between opportunities for students to study two languages in S3 and S4 and uptake at Higher subsequently. However, there are positive and negative effects. On the one hand, students who take up the chance to study two languages are likely to be more motivated and therefore to continue to Higher. On the other, the effects of diversification may dilute numbers interested in any one language to the point where it is no longer viable for students to continue. Schools responded to this phenomenon in different ways. We return to this issue when looking at strategies school have adopted to strengthen the position of modern languages, in Chapter 6.

4.9 Choices at S4

Restrictions on uptake of modern languages at Higher

Our preliminary research suggested two types of restriction on uptake of modern languages at Higher. The first related to the number of Highers students take, and to what might be termed 'balance' in the range of subjects students take at Higher. For students who have not yet decided upon a specific career, and who therefore wish to keep their options open, it was suggested that two sciences at Higher is perceived as 'normal' by universities and employers alike, while two modern languages is 'specialised'.

Furthermore, even one modern language can, effectively, be squeezed out by other factors: if the 'normal' pattern for students taking 5 Highers is English, maths, two sciences and one other subject, this means that modern languages are competing not only with 'professional' subjects such as accounting and IT but also with mainstream social science subjects such as history or modern studies, or with a third science. In fact, the most common pattern for students taking five Highers is English, maths, biology, chemistry and physics. Some teachers argued that students, conscious of the way in which the exam system works, opt for social sciences because of the course work element:

> *Many of them wish to go to university and they need UCAS points. Foreign languages are regarded as being difficult or chancy and therefore they choose a subject they know they can mug up ... where the exams are more appropriate for gaining UCAS points. That tends to be the social subjects ... where a large part of the work can be done in advance by dissertation and they know where they stand with that.*
>
> (Principal teacher)

It was also suggested in the preliminary phase that the University 'points' system is well-known to teachers and students: this promotes four 'good' results at one sitting, and therefore, again, is likely to lead to the loss of the fifth 'other' subject (ie the modern language/Modern Studies/IT etc. choice). However, our survey data showed that relatively few principal teachers believed that this was a major factor in student choice: just under a third (32%) thought that this was of major or some importance, but the majority thought that it was not relevant at all.

The second form of restriction relates to barriers which modern languages departments themselves erect to discourage students whose chances of doing well in the Higher exam are felt to be limited. Our survey data confirmed that these

practices are widespread in schools: most teachers (84%) said that they restricted access, the majority (55%) looking for at least a Credit level pass, and half of this group asking for Credit writing as well. These restrictions, which other teachers such as guidance staff and senior managers regarded as excessive (implying that General level passes are usually acceptable) were justified by modern languages teachers on the grounds of the difficulty of bridging the gap between Standard Grade and Higher and the difficulty of the Higher exam itself.

We can thus see that the two forms of restriction may constitute a 'pincer movement', squeezing the number of competent linguists able and willing to take the Higher exam. On the one hand, the most able students (those taking two sciences) tend to see two sciences rather than two languages as a more appropriate 'generalist' focus to their Highers. On the other, modern languages departments see only the most able students as suitable candidates for the Higher course. As one headteacher commented in our preliminary interviews, the challenge for modern languages departments is to cater for students of intermediate ability at Higher.

The role of guidance

According to the students we interviewed in our preliminary research, the principal influence on the choices they make at S4 was their own ideas about the careers they wished to pursue, and the extent to which they had narrowed these down to specific jobs. The influence of parents or teachers was secondary. It appeared that by S4 many students already had future careers in mind. Those who had decided on specific careers knew what they needed and therefore chose Highers in the appropriate subjects. The decision whether or not to take a modern language for this group depended therefore on perceptions of what was needed for the particular educational goals or careers they have in mind. (How students come to these views is discussed in more detail in Chapter 5.)

Our survey data show that students do, nevertheless, receive advice from a range of sources. The majority of S4 students had been given advice by their families (70%), by subject teachers (62%) and by guidance staff (57%). A little over a third cited advice from careers teachers (38%). About two thirds (63%) of the S4 group thought this advice had been helpful. What students are looking for appears to be advice about the nature of the course rather than information about careers and educational opportunities, however. Thus it may well be the case that students make the initial decision about what would be most valuable in terms of their educational or career goals independently of the school, but then seek more detailed information about the course from subject and guidance teachers.

Our preliminary research suggested that this approach to decision making is supported by the way in which guidance teachers work. From our interviews with guidance staff in 'case study' schools, it seemed that their strategy in general terms is to 'go with the student' and help him/her to follow up interests, ideas, etc. already articulated. Guidance teachers thus tend to be responsive rather than proactive, and may not promote modern languages if students do not indicate an interest. This approach may have a bearing on the uptake of Highers in modern

languages, because as we shall see in the next chapter, students do not always see the relevance of languages to their educational or career goals, for a variety of reasons.

Discussions with guidance teachers also suggested that some did not have all the relevant information about the place of modern languages in the context of particular career paths, and, in particular, that they were unfamiliar with the shift in Higher Education from modern languages as the main object of (primarily literary) study to languages as a professional skill, in the context of combined degrees. In addition, some guidance teachers appeared to take the view that language learning is simply too difficult:

> *Pupils are not good at transferring skills, ideas and knowledge from one context to another. Yet that is what learning a modern language requires at a certain level.*
>
> (Guidance teacher)

Although our data in this area are limited, we have little evidence to suggest that the expertise of guidance teachers or their approach to advising students on appropriate choices for Higher would lead them to advocate modern languages (although we are not suggesting that they discourage students considering taking the subject). If, as our interview data imply, guidance teachers cultivate a 'neutral' position in relation to the claims of individual subjects, 'lobbying' by modern languages teachers would be inappropriate and possibly counterproductive. modern languages teachers may need to 'sell' the subject more actively themselves.

4.10 Effects of the decline

Lastly, in this chapter, we consider the question of whether the decline in uptake has, in itself, discouraged students from taking Highers in modern languages. It may be that as fewer students take languages at Higher, it comes to be perceived as more and more 'specialised', as was suggested earlier, and less and less 'fashionable'.

Teachers, to some extent, subscribe to this view: most (79%) held that the notion that languages are 'out of fashion' was of major or some importance in discouraging students from taking Highers in modern languages, and almost the same proportion (71%) agreed that the idea that languages are 'too specialised' also plays part in students' decisions. Significantly, however, few teachers thought that traditions within the school of taking modern languages to Higher influenced the decisions of those who *had* decided to take a language in S5 (only 22% thought that this was of major or some importance).

Many (60%) of the parents interviewed were unaware of the decline in uptake at Higher and expressed concern when this issue was raised in the course of the interview. None of the parents we interviewed held the notion that languages was, in some way, an unfashionable subject; rather they expressed the view that parents needed to be informed of the problem so that they could take a more active role in encouraging their children to continue to study languages. They also thought that schools and educational authorities at local and national level could be doing more

to promote Highers in modern languages, in order to support parents' actions in this regard.

It is unclear from our data whether students held the view that languages were 'unfashionable', although, as we saw earlier, there was a view that languages are too specialised for students who are trying to keep their options open for Higher Education and for future career choices. However, when asked to say in their own words why they had decided not to take a modern language Higher themselves, and why, more generally, they thought Highers in modern languages were in decline, students participating in the survey did not give reasons relating to fashion, peer-pressure or to over-specialisation.

Our data thus suggest that there may be a vicious circle at work, in that declining numbers are seen as part of the unfashionability of the subject and thus provoke further decline. However, if this is the case, students and their parents are not aware of this. There may be an effect on uptake of modern languages at Higher, but it is difficult to identify.

4.11 Summary

1. This chapter has considered the impact of schools' modern language policies and practice on the learning context within the school, investigating several hypotheses in relation to the decline of uptake of modern languages at Higher.
2. Broadly speaking, these hypotheses fall into three categories:
   - A that learners' experiences of language learning in S3 and S4 lead them to dislike languages and therefore not to want to continue with languages in S5;
   - B that restrictions relating partly to the options and choices systems within schools and partly to conditions limiting access to Higher imposed by modern languages departments themselves prevent some students interested in continuing to study languages from doing so;
   - C that, at the point at which students make decisions about Highers, there is no strong encouragement for them to take modern languages coming from guidance, from modern languages teachers themselves, or more generally, from the 'ethos' of the school.
3. Our findings in relation to A are that students are critical of aspects of the curriculum content in S3 and S4, but less concerned about teaching methods or the impact of resources, class size or mixed ability teaching/ grouping. These last three issues, on the other hand, are of some concern to teachers. Some students are unwilling to continue language study because of the nature of the curriculum. The other factors are problematic but are likely to affect uptake only indirectly.
4. In relation to B, our findings suggest that the two different types of restriction on uptake interact to exclude some potential candidates from higher. While the information and 'mythology' attached to choices at S4, and the structuring of option 'columns' may discourage able students in particular from taking languages when these are placed in opposition to science or other attractive

subjects, modern languages departments are also making it difficult for students other than the very able to take Highers in this subject because of the perceived difficulty of the examination.

5. In relation to C, the data suggest that modern languages departments and others with an interest in promoting languages to Higher need to encourage students more actively. In the absence of 'marketing' or active encouragement to consider languages from guidance staff, students are unaware of many of the good reasons why they should continue to study languages and opt for other subjects.

5: Learner attitudes and motivation

5.1 Introduction

The issues surrounding language-learners' attitudes, motivation, self-confidence and reasons for drop-out have been discussed in Chapter 2. Existing research suggests four main reasons why students might choose to abandon language studies at the first opportunity:

A students' experiences of language learning are not intrinsically rewarding;

B students are not interested in other languages or cultures, possibly through lack of real contact;

C students see no material gain for themselves in learning another language (principally in terms of furthering their educational or career goals) and perceive other subjects as being practically more relevant;

D the expectations which students have of themselves as language learners are not met, and their confidence in themselves as language learners is not high.

This chapter explores the extent to which these explanations apply to S4 and S5 students, and how the attitudes and motivation they have towards language learning influence their decisions to continue or abandon language study when they reach S5.

5.2 Experiences of language learning

We saw in the previous section that students are critical of modern languages teaching for a variety of reasons, including emphases on 'self'-oriented curriculum content and on grammar, and teaching styles which entailed a high degree of teacher dependence. What does the students' critique of the curriculum and teaching methods tell us about their approach to learning? We focus here on two issues which are, in a sense, the mirror images of their views on teaching: the desire for a greater amount of cultural input in modern languages courses and the dislike of 'rote learning'.

When asked to say in their own words what they liked best about language learning, the two most frequently cited benefits were the opportunity to communicate with foreigners, and the chance to learn about other countries and other cultures. One of the students we interviewed in the preliminary stages of the research commented on the enormous importance of the cultural dimension, from her point of view:

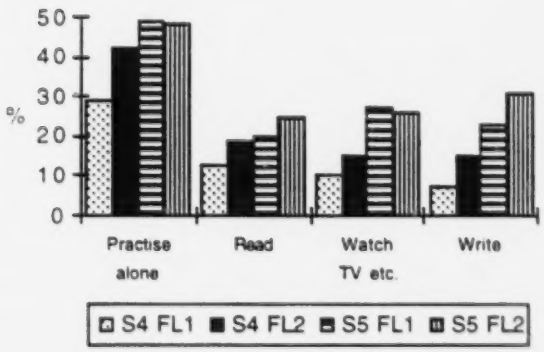
> *You can read in the original language and you can experience the culture if you're dealing with the foreign language all the time. I don't want to miss out. I don't want to spend my entire life surrounded by everything I know. I want to learn more about things. With French I can read what French people think about things. I don't want to rely on other people's interpretations of it.*
>
> S5 Student

Given that this is the case, the fact that S3/4 course content is viewed by students as predominantly 'self-oriented' (rather than about the country in which the language they are learning is spoken) and over-concerned with grammar (from

the student point of view, at least), and given also that student opportunities to communicate first hand with foreigners and to experience the culture of the country whose language they are learning are becoming more limited (our data show that time with the modern language assistant and opportunities to go on trips abroad or on school exchanges are restricted) there is something paradoxical about students choosing cultural aspects and 'real' communication as their favourite elements of the course. Either they have enormously enjoyed the very limited opportunities they have had in this regard, or they are engaging in wishful thinking.

The problem is exacerbated by the fact that, according to our data, students make relatively little use of modern language resources which would be fairly readily available to them - books, films or magazines in modern languages, contact with native speakers by letter or e-mail. Figure 5.1 shows that students' willingness to use their modern language skills in their spare time increases from S4 to S5, and those studying a second language are also more likely to make use of this in their own time. However, the figures are low. Less than 30% commenting on their first or only modern language in S4 said that they practised the language in some way on their own; and the fact that less than 50% of those taking Highers in modern languages are prepared to do so seems particularly worrying. The numbers who read, write or watch TV, films or videos in modern languages are extremely small.

Figure 5.1: Proportions of S4 and S5 students who use their language skills in their spare time



Of course, teachers cannot *make* students use their languages in their spare time. However, it may be that because of the current emphasis on talking about oneself and on grammar in S3/4 classes, teachers fail to draw students' attention to the possibility of making use of their languages in this way, or to help them develop the skills which would allow them to do so in a constructive and enjoyable way. Our teacher survey data show that although a substantial number of schools offer opportunities to use the language in 'real' situations (such as through visits and exchanges), the number of schools with modern language clubs - where some of the 'leisure' activities discussed above might be explored and supported - is small (16%). Clearly, when so few students choose to use their language(s) in their spare time, they do not perceive any immediate usefulness in terms of what they are learning, and are consequently hampered in their desire to communicate and to learn about other cultures and ways of life.

What students liked least about learning languages was grammar. We have already seen that deciding the amount of grammar which needs to be taught in S3 and S4 is a dilemma for teachers. In interview for our preliminary research, teachers were very aware that grammar teaching was one of the main reasons why language learning was unpopular, and some speculated that the reason for this was that 'rote learning' and attention to small details, which are an essential part of language learning, are 'out of fashion' in an age of calculators and spell check technology:

> *I think nowadays, as in the past, a language requires exactness, precision, learning, caring about being accurate. ... I think what has happened, from what I can glean from other subjects, they have abandoned that more and more. There is less and less learning, everything is handed to them or it is a broader sweep of knowledge rather than precision and they perceive languages as difficult, nit-picking and a pain in the neck because they are not accustomed to that degree of effort.*
>
> (Principal teacher)

> *There should be a more realistic attitude in marking towards formal accuracy, since formal accuracy is demanded in very few other subjects.*
>
> (Principal teacher)

Our data raise two questions. Firstly, is it true that memorisation and attention to detail have vanished from other subject areas? If so, it is clear that modern language teachers cannot rely on students being able to learn in this way or to understand the reasons for doing so. If memorisation is essential to language learning, teachers need to spend time explicitly developing techniques and explaining to students why it is important - and useful - to develop such skills. Secondly, it may be worth reviewing whether grammar has to be taught in this way. One can envisage, for example, an approach more similar to a linguistics model, where the principles of grammar are demonstrated and discussed, and perhaps compared explicitly with English. Our data show that currently only around a quarter of those who participated in the survey (27% of S4 and S5 students) believe that studying a modern language has helped them to understand their own language better. Our data also suggest it would be worth giving further consideration to what grammar is for and discussing this with students. Recent research (eg Van Patten and Cadieno, 1993) suggests that learners make better progress if their learning of grammar is geared to comprehension rather than mainly to production, in the initial stages at least. This enables them to process a richer variety of spoken and written text more quickly. In the case of Scottish students, this might help them to cope with a higher level of intellectual challenge and develop a greater capacity to process material on their own out of school than our research indicates to be the case at present. Accordingly, an awareness of the role of grammar and encouragement to observe the principles in action might help students to acquire some of the aspects of the grammar of the language they are learning without having to rely over-much on rote memorisation.

Students' interest in the cultural context of the language they are studying and their dislike of rote learning both suggest that they are dissatisfied with what might be termed a 'mechanistic' approach to language learning. If it is the case that much of S3/4 teaching consists of the repetition and memorisation of words, phrases,

conjugations, vocabulary lists, primarily aimed at producing the appropriate level of spoken competence needed for the Standard Grade exam (and we must stress again that our data are not based on classroom observation but on student and teacher perceptions) then it is not surprising that students find the subject difficult (because memorisation is tedious and therefore hard) and yet, as was suggested in our discussion of other research (see Chapter 2), that the intellectual demands of the subject are 'humiliatingly low'. Our data show that few students believe that learning languages is in any way intellectually stimulating: only 30% of the S4 sample held this view, and while the figure rises to 51% in the S5 sample, this seems likely to be a reflection of the greater intellectual stimulation provided by the Higher course.

We have to conclude, then, that many students do not find the experience of learning another language 'intrinsically rewarding' and that this is likely to be a factor in the decline in uptake of modern languages at Higher at S5.

5.3 Integrative and instrumental orientations

We saw in Chapter 2 that the question of student motivation to learn modern languages has been extensively researched. Key constructs from this research, as we saw, included 'integrative' and 'instrumental' orientations: the former, the desire to identify with other cultures and with the speakers of other languages; the latter, the recognition that mastery of another language will help in achieving personal or career-related goals (such as gaining entry to higher education, or the opportunity to work for an international organisation).

Integrative orientations

It seems unlikely that either an integrative or an instrumental orientation is present very strongly in Scottish society, given the decline in modern languages presentations at Higher. However, as we saw earlier, in Section 5.2, our data suggest that students would be interested in learning more about other countries and in communicating with speakers of the languages they are learning, if the opportunities were there. They appear to be hampered in this regard by the limited cultural content, particularly of the S3 and S4 course, by relatively few opportunities to take part in school exchanges, to work with modern language assistants (60% of S4 students commenting on their first or only modern language, and 56% of those taking a second language came into contact with the modern language assistant once a month or less – or not at all) or otherwise to come into face-to-face contact with speakers of the language they are learning, and by a lack of awareness of or familiarity with resources in the modern language available in Scotland, such as books and magazines, Internet sites, videos, etc, as we saw in Section 5.2.

At the same time, it is important to recognise an influential counter-current to the positive attitudes towards other cultures we have discussed so far. This is the view that learning other languages is unimportant because most foreigners speak English. From our preliminary data, we found that many students (a surprising number) had had the experience of foreign holidays (not necessarily in the country

of the language they are learning) where 'everyone speaks English' and had therefore come to the conclusion that it is not necessary for them to learn other languages, as the following discussion between a group of S3 students illustrates:

A: I think it is getting less and less useful these days with things like computers and English being such an important language. I think for foreign people, being able to speak English is more useful to them than us being able to speak their language.

B: I think foreign people learn a lot more English than we do of their languages. When we were trying to speak to somebody, their English was perfect, nothing wrong with it, whereas I hardly knew anything.

A: They start at a really early age.

C: Yes, but English is just one language, they don't really need to learn anything else. There's so many different languages - French, Spanish, German - that we have to learn but so many people can speak English.

When we tested the hypothesis that such views were widespread among students, the response to a specific question on this point was unequivocal. Students strongly rejected this view (71% disagreed).

However, at a later stage, when students were asked to say in their own words why they thought that the number of people taking Highers in modern languages was falling, the notion that modern languages are unnecessary as so many foreigners speak English does emerge as one of the main explanations students put forward. The message would appear to be that while few students were prepared to endorse this view personally, they felt that it was widely held by others.

Instrumental orientations

The principal instrumental reasons for taking a modern language Higher for students in S4 and S5 would be the view that such a qualification would be of value for gaining entry into Higher Education or in gaining employment.

How valuable is a modern language Higher in terms of gaining entry into Higher Education? Although some students felt that a Higher modern language was not as highly regarded as Higher in other subjects, such as the sciences, it was not possible in this study to investigate the views of admissions tutors on this point. In the absence of other evidence, we assume that a Higher in modern languages has the same value, in general terms, as a Higher in any other subject. Clearly, however, specific degree courses may specify preferences for Highers in particular, relevant subject areas. It seems unlikely that Highers in modern languages are specified by degree courses other than those in particular languages. Despite being a 'core' subject in school, modern languages do not enjoy the status of English or maths as an indicator of a general competence (like 'literacy' and 'numeracy') which all students, whatever their discipline, require.

However, we note that there has been a shift within Higher Education away from single honours in a particular language to combine programmes involving a language and something else (Coleman, 1996). These range from joint honours courses in which students have the opportunity to link language skills with a professional subject such as law, business or engineering, to course components within other degree subjects ('German for scientists', etc.) In addition, many

degree courses offer students opportunities for study or work experience abroad. We saw earlier that school guidance staff may not be aware of this shift. There is a responsibility too on Higher Education to make clear to prospective students the potential advantages of achieving a Higher in a modern language in this context. Students might be encouraged to continue to study languages in S5 and S6 if they were more aware of the opportunities to spend time studying or on work experience schemes abroad and of the linguistic demands this would make.

In this context, we note also that there is no evidence of Scottish schools developing similar combined programmes, as yet (although, as we have noted elsewhere, schools in other countries do this by teaching a range of subjects through the medium of a foreign language.) Scottish schools are perpetuating a notion of a foreign language in isolation which Coleman's research (*op. cit.*) indicates has undergone radical review in universities.

What of students whose choices were primarily influenced by their understanding of employers' interests? What encouragement to develop their linguistic skills were they likely to find? In the course of our research, we carried out two investigations into business perspectives: firstly, a telephone survey of a range of employers; and secondly, more detailed telephone interviews with ten employers who were willing to discuss the issues in more depth. All the primary areas of recruitment and employment in Scotland were included in our survey and interviews: finance, export; tourism, call centres, manufacture, government bodies, overseas companies setting up in Scotland, recruitment agencies and services. Of all the industries surveyed, only three industries indicated a need for employees with language skills: exporting and manufacturing companies, and call centres. However, language skills are only needed for work in certain departments. In these, native or near native command of a second language is essential, but has to be combined with other skills relevant to the position, such as sales or marketing. Thus, even where there is a demand for modern language skills, languages alone are not enough. There appears to be no employment sector in Scotland where languages are considered a primary skill. Despite this, the figures for Scotland's manufactured exports published by the Scottish Council Development and Industry (SCDI, 1996) show clearly that of the top 15 countries to which Scotland exports manufactured goods, 14 do not have English as their first language, and that France (first) and Germany (second) are well ahead of USA (third).

While they did not require language skills for most jobs and careers, many Scottish employers said that they valued them. They believed that competence in a modern language indicates not only the breadth of applicants' education, but also an ability to communicate well. It is hard, however, to find evidence to counter the view expressed by a number of principal teachers of modern languages and other secondary school staff in guidance or senior management who felt that Scottish business pays only lip-service to modern language skills. One employer effectively acknowledged this by commenting that he could not specify competence in a modern language in recruitment literature as this would substantially reduce the number of otherwise suitable candidates. This suggests a vicious circle whereby students reject modern languages because they are not needed for entry into the

employment, and employers fail to indicate their interest in modern languages because of the small number of potential applicants who could fulfil such conditions.

Another way of looking at this issue would be to consider the careers of people who are competent in modern languages. Is it the case that such people are better placed to develop their careers after recruitment because of the linguistic skills they possess (in addition to the skills which won them the job originally)? Are they able, for example, to take up overseas postings or develop trade abroad more effectively than their counterparts who do not speak other languages? In some jobs where languages are required, employers are recruiting foreign native speakers of the particular languages they need, rather than looking for Scottish employees with the necessary language skills. (This is particularly the case with call centres.) What kinds of careers do these foreign employees build from this start? It may be the case that while employers are unconcerned about promoting language skills among their Scottish employees, it would be in the interests of the individual employee to maintain and enhance their language skills because these could be advantageous at a later stage in their careers.

It seems clear, then, that there is little emphasis on modern language competence in promotional materials for higher education or recruitment into most employment sectors, and that students are therefore unlikely to perceive strong external pressure to maintain or develop their modern language skills.

In this context, then, it is important to note that the main reason put forward by students *for* taking their language(s) on to Higher fall quite clearly into the 'instrumental' category: almost half (48%) of the S4 students who had chosen to continue to study modern languages in S5 thought that one or more languages would be useful for employment purposes. (It seems significant, however, that the proportion of S5 students who thought this was only 30%, although usefulness for career purposes was still the most popular reason for taking modern languages in S5.) Similarly, one of the main reasons S4 students put forward for *not* taking modern languages in S5 was that they thought languages would not be useful to them in employment. Thus it seems clear that instrumental motivation (positive or negative) is an important factor in determining student choices. If students were persuaded of the value of languages for employment purposes, the data suggest that this would lead to a rise in the numbers taking Highers in modern languages.

5.4 Expectations of success and linguistic confidence

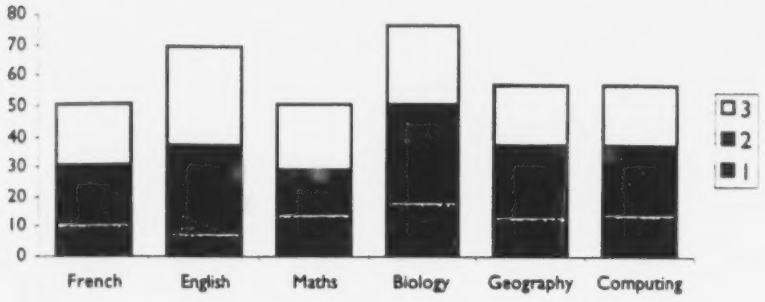
We now turn to look at students' own expectations of themselves as language learners, and their confidence in their linguistic ability, with a view to identifying what bearing these may have on uptake at Higher.

Students' expectations of success as language learners

Firstly, we look at students' expectations of success in language learning, and the value which they place on success. We have seen in Chapter 1 that it is difficult to

gain Grades 1, 2 or 3 in Standard Grade modern languages exams, in comparison with other subjects, as is illustrated in Figure 5.2 below.

Figure 5.2: Percentages of Standard Grade candidates gaining Grades 1, 2 or 3 in various subjects in 1996



We have to take into account the fact that this picture is somewhat distorted by the context in which students choose their Standard Grade courses. While English, maths and a modern language are virtually compulsory, students have an element of choice in relation to the others and the higher pass rates at Grades 1, 2 or 3 to some extent reflect this. However, this does not detract from the fact that the exam is difficult, in the context of other Standard Grade subjects (while slightly more students gain a Grade 1 in French than in English, considerably more gain Grade 2 or Grade 3 in English) and that students' perceptions of the difficulty of the exam are likely to be influenced by their teacher's expectations (which will be linked to overall success rates).

In addition to this general view of the difficulty of modern languages at Standard Grade, there is students' day to day experience of preparing for the exam. As we have discussed in a previous section (5.2), our data suggest that students find much of the day to day work of language learning tedious (in that it involves much memorisation, of vocabulary, phrases and grammatical patterns) and consequently hard (it is difficult to be motivated to learn lists, and hard to maintain the concentration required) without the subject being in any way intellectually challenging. This in itself suggests that students' expectations of success may not be high (because of the perceived difficulty) but that experiences of success may not be highly valued (because the subject is not seen as challenging).

From our preliminary research, we found evidence to suggest that students' and teachers' view of the examination itself was that it was highly unpredictable. This view appears to reflect in part the fact that there is no prescribed vocabulary list for Standard Grade, and in part that the choice of texts for listening and comprehension elements of the exam can come from a very wide range of topic areas (particularly, apparently, in French). Thus, it seems impossible to revise for the exam.

> *The subject matter can be just about anything under the sun - there isn't a strict syllabus ... We have catch-all things like 'youth interests' and the examiners decide that reflexology is a youth interest because it is a young person doing it, so we get a passage on that. It has to be fairly well circumscribed, the sort of vocabulary they are looking for as well and the kind of grammar that is*

appropriate. In Latin they have no difficulty - they specify verbs of X conjugation and X parts of the verb. They have no difficulty specifying what they want.

(Principal teacher)

Such a sense of unpredictability means that even students who do well at Standard Grade can lack confidence in their abilities: they feel that their success could be attributed to luck. Consequently, despite good results, such students may not be convinced of their ability to tackle a Higher language.

Learners' linguistic confidence

How confident, then, do S4 and S5 students feel about what they have learnt and their ability to use their languages beyond the school context? Our data suggest that although the students who took part in our survey saw themselves as hard workers, they were not convinced of their ability to communicate in the language they had been studying. Those taking two languages were more confident than those taking one, and S5 students taking Highers in one or more languages were more confident than S4 students. Table 5.1 below shows how S4 and S5 students taking one or two modern languages responded to various statements relating to linguistic confidence.

Table 5.1: Proportion of S4 and S5 students who agreed with statements relating to linguistic confidence

	S4		S5	
	L1	L2	L1	L2
I enjoy the challenge of trying to communicate in this language	52%	74%	77%	86%
I work hard at learning this language	52%	74%	69%	80%
When trying to communicate in this language, I'm prepared to make mistakes	75%	75%	80%	77%
I feel confident when asked to speak this language in class	29%	48%	39%	47%
I haven't got much talent for learning this language	22%	10%	8%	13%
I feel confident about communicating with speakers of the language*	23%	34%	54%	66%

*The wording of this statement was slightly different for S5 students: 'The course makes me confident about being able to communicate with native speakers.' The S5 group represented as responding to this statement is of those taking Highers rather than modules.

In general terms, these statements suggest a growth in confidence and commitment to the language(s) students are learning from S4 to S5, and also among those taking two languages in comparison with those taking one. Just over half (52%) of the S4 students commenting on their first or only modern language said that they enjoyed the challenge of learning a language and that they were prepared to work hard at this. These figures rise to around 70% or more for S4 students commenting on their second language and for S5 students. Encouragingly, for all groups, three quarters or more said that they were prepared

to make mistakes when trying to communicate: fear of making mistakes is a major inhibitor to progress in learning a language.

The number who felt that they had no talent for learning the language(s) they were studying was small. However, confidence in speaking in class or in communicating with native speakers was low, particularly when we consider that our sample represents students with the greatest interest and aptitude for language learning: less than a quarter of S4 students commenting on their first or only modern language felt confident about communicating with native speakers, and only a third of S4 students taking a second language did so. While the figure rises for S5 students, the fact that one third of those taking two languages at Higher (ie the most committed of all) still do not feel confident about this is cause for concern. It seems likely that this is linked to the lack of confidence in speaking in class: figures for this show relatively little change between S4 and S5 here. At no point does the figure reach 50%. This finding seems particularly worrying, and suggests either that teachers are excessively critical of students' spoken performance or that the demands of Standard Grade and Higher in relation to speaking lead to a counterproductive level of anxiety.

Classroom pressure would therefore seem to be one of the major reasons for lack of confidence in communicating with native speakers. Our preliminary research also suggested that students with experience of attempting to use their languages abroad had, in many cases, been frustrated by the refusal of the foreign interlocutors to reply in the modern language, insisting instead on using English. The effects of this were to dent confidence quite markedly:

> *But my German was really bad, their English was much better. I was restricted to a few phrases. I would like to have been able to hold a real conversation about real things.* *(S5 student)*

A key issue for those wishing to promote modern languages in schools must be the issue of students' confidence in their ability to use the language(s) they are learning to communicate with native speakers. This is the point of the subject. At the moment at which they sit Standard Grade exams, after four (or more) years of modern language study, it is reasonable for students recognised as competent in this area to expect to be able to communicate with native speakers to some degree. Most of these students will not go on to Higher in modern languages, and thus their confidence as adults in their ability to communicate is likely to be determined by their perceptions at the end of S4. That only a third (at most) of this group feel confident is a cause for concern.

It may be argued that the amount of time available for language learning from S1 to S4 is not enough to enable students to acquire high level communicative skills. However, the issue here is not the level of students' skills but their confidence. Teachers and those who devise examinations may need firstly to revise their expectations and secondly to make more effort to ensure that students are clear what these expectations are and the extent to which they are meeting them. If the demands of Standard Grade in relation to speaking are best met by having students learn set phrases, we need to be honest with students about the limits of this approach for free-ranging communication. If students were clear that when they

travelled abroad their skills would be limited, their disappointment might not be as great. Alternatively, if, more generally, we feel that a limited number of set phrases is not a high achievement after 4 (or more) years' work, this suggests a fundamental review of the course, from primary school upwards, but particularly in relation to S3 and S4.

The question of what is expected of students by the end of their Standard Grade course is, in the light of this discussion, important. If competent students lack confidence in their ability to communicate with speakers of the language(s) they are learning, this suggests that expectations - their own or those of others - are set too high. The lack of confidence and sense of failure to meet expectations in students who are in fact the most competent in this subject would thus appear to be a key factor in the decline of uptake of modern languages at Higher.

5.5 Summary

1. In this chapter, we have looked at learners' attitudes and motivation towards language learning and reasons why their experiences and their views might predispose them to abandoning language study as soon as it is no longer compulsory.
2. We explored four hypotheses, all of which, if proved, would strongly suggest that many students in S4 would be unwilling to continue to study languages in S5. These were:
   - A Students' experiences of language learning are not intrinsically rewarding
   - B Students are not interested in other languages or cultures
   - C Students see no material gain for themselves in learning another language (principally in terms of furthering their educational or career goals)
   - D The expectations which students have of themselves as language learners are not met, and their confidence in themselves as language learners is not high
3. In relation to A, we found considerable evidence that students' experiences of language learning, particularly in S3 and S4, are not intrinsically rewarding.
4. In relation to B, we found that many students were very interested in other languages and cultures and would have welcomed more emphasis on this aspect of language learning in their course. It also appears that students are in need of more support to enable them to make use of the languages they are learning independently of the school, through reading, watching films and videos, letter-writing and ICT.
5. In relation to C, we found that students saw long term benefits in language learning but were less convinced of the short-term benefits, in relation to achieving their immediate educational and career goals.
6. In relation to D, we found that students and others lacked clear expectations of what they should have achieved at the end of four years of language study, and that implicit expectations may be unrealistically high. As a consequence, students were not confident about their ability to communicate with native speakers and were frustrated by their apparent lack of achievement.

6: Tacking the decline in uptake at Higher

6.1 Introduction

The decline in uptake of modern language at Higher has not been a sudden phenomenon which has overtaken schools but one which has been steadily occurring over the past two decades. Most secondary schools within the state sector have been affected by this trend but not uniformly so, and a small proportion have consistently managed to hang on to their numbers albeit with fluctuations in certain years. Given that the external factors arising from national policy decisions, the arrangements for Standard Grade and Higher examinations and wider societal issues are essentially the same for all state secondary schools, it seemed appropriate to investigate how individual schools have been tackling the question of promoting modern languages and addressing the problem of uptake; and to establish how successful they feel they have been in doing so.

A number of schools in the case-study and national survey samples fall into the group which have been 'bucking the trend' of decline and this offered the opportunity to try to identify any common factors or cluster of factors which seemed to be present in such schools. However, analysis of our survey data found no statistically significant differences between those schools where the numbers of students taking Highers has remained the same or increased over the last ten years, and those where numbers have been declining. Though disappointing, this was not entirely surprising, since no obvious solution to the problem of uptake had been either anticipated by the researchers nor offered by others engaged with this complex problem.

This chapter therefore looks at some of the strategies which principal teachers of modern languages and headteachers mentioned they had tried in order to increase uptake of modern languages at Higher. The fact that these can only have had limited success in improving uptake (as many principal teachers pointed out in reviewing matters within their own school) must be borne in mind, but it is important to recognise that schools have made attempts to change the situation.

6.2 Headteachers' perspectives

In their survey, headteachers were asked about the strategies which had been used in their schools to promote languages. The 54 headteachers who responded came up with in excess of 40 different strategies, most of which fell into two categories: language promotion, and changes to the structure of provision within the school.

Language promotion strategies included exchanges, visits or links with the countries concerned and one-off school-based events such as a French cafe in the school, French or German days in the school dining hall, a modern languages department open morning, a PTA evening involving parents in language learning, a European awareness evening and visits to classes by industrialists with a modern language competence and by French football players. In addition, more regular events such as awarding language certificates, entering language competitions,

displaying students' work and multi-lingual signs around the school and lunch-time language clubs were also mentioned.

Changes to the structure of provision involved extending the range of languages on offer at different stages, and changes to option choice forms for S3 and S5 to accommodate modern languages better, with increased emphasis at option choice time on the importance of a modern language for future careers. This involved senior students as well as specialist career advice in some cases.

Several headteachers (11%) commented that the calibre of the modern languages staff was a key factor in maintaining or increasing uptake, and cited good teaching, a high departmental profile and successful new appointments to the school in this regard.

Very few of the strategies to promote modern languages in their schools had major resource implications and only four headteachers (7%) mentioned an upgrading of classrooms or investment in new courses, although a review of teaching materials and approaches was underway in several schools. For some schools, this included a specific focus on the impact of MLPS.

Headteachers were also asked how successful they thought the various strategies had been in improving uptake. While many felt that particular events and exchanges and visits had been successful, only 3 headteachers (5%) felt that there had been any lasting benefit in terms of uptake at Higher; a further 13 (24%) said such strategies had met with 'limited' or 'reasonable' success.

Headteachers were also asked specifically whether they wished to increase uptake of modern languages in their schools and if so what plans they had made to do this. Only two headteachers said they did not wish to increase uptake in their schools, although a further four had reservations about actively promoting this as they felt that student choice was of paramount importance at the S5 stage and that any form of direction might be counter productive.

Approximately a third of headteacher respondents (31%) mentioned modern language diversification at S1, S2 or S3 as an important strategy in trying to increase uptake. In some schools, extra time was being given to a second foreign language for some or all students in S1/S2, but the most common arrangement for diversification was to offer a choice between French and German, for example, from S1 and then offer a start to the other language from S3 (the cross-over model). In their survey 7% of headteachers pointed to a restructuring of the option choice sheet in S2 to allow more students to choose a second modern language from S3, whilst others had reviewed the information given to parents and students to promote such second language options. There were, however, some dissenting voices who felt that abandoning this model of modern language diversification lower down the school (ie offering only one foreign language to all pupils in S1/S2, almost certainly French) would produce the best conditions for ensuring continuity and viable classes higher up the school. Others saw modern language diversification in S5/S6 through the introduction of modules in languages such as Spanish as the best way of boosting numbers taking a language beyond the compulsory stages.

Apart from additional time given to second foreign languages in S1/S2, there were few other examples of strategies which had major resource implications for the schools themselves. In two cases, modern languages departments had been allocated an extra period a week for S4 students who would be taking the Credit writing paper at Standard Grade and who were considered to be likely candidates for Higher. However, it was clear from headteachers' responses that some schools' number threshold for Higher and CSYS classes was routinely being relaxed to support modern languages in S5 and S6 and to a lesser extent for modern language beginners in S3 or S5. Other headteachers mentioned combined Higher and module classes as a means of establishing viable modern language groups in S5/S6, and the use of bi-level teaching for modern language classes at these stages was deemed likely to increase with the introduction of Higher Still.

Headteachers were asked whether their school had any policy priorities concerning modern languages. A substantial number (61%) said they had no such priorities whilst others argued that a special case could not be made for languages especially as it was already compulsory for all S3/S4 students in their school. However, two-thirds of headteachers felt that modern languages had not suffered any adverse effects from particular school policies, such as an encouragement or requirement to take a specific number of subjects to Standard Grade or Higher.

For a small number of headteachers, the business of boosting numbers at Higher was for the modern languages department alone and several (13%) highlighted the need for a review of teaching and learning approaches from S1 upwards to improve quality and increase success at Standard Grade as necessary prerequisites for raising levels of uptake in their schools. However, there were more headteachers who indicated in their responses that modern languages departments - and, more generally, the school - had done all that they could to address the problem and that there was little else that could be attempted internally.

6.3. Principal teachers' perspectives

In their survey, principal teachers were asked to indicate whether they were implementing any of the strategies which their colleagues in the earlier stage of the research had identified as beneficial to students' modern language learning. Of those teachers surveyed, the majority (87%) said they were making students more aware of grammar and most (82%) were also putting greater emphasis on writing. Three quarters (75%) had moved to more whole-class teaching, 60% were using setting to stretch more able students and just over half (53%) were developing students' reading skills through extended texts. The evidence emerging from the student data is that many of these strategies would not be met with great enthusiasm from a majority of the students concerned, although their underlying purpose is clearly to boost attainments at credit level and in writing, in particular, to give a better foundation for the Higher course.

Teachers were also asked about opportunities outside the classroom which might enhance students' modern language learning and two thirds (67%) said their school had organised visits to countries where the modern language was spoken. Slightly fewer (61%) had organised exchanges, and the same proportion (61%)

had access to a modern language assistant. Just over half (51%) had access to the new technologies such as the Internet or CD-Roms. Work experience abroad and modern language clubs were provided in a small number of schools (19% and 16% respectively).

Teachers were asked to list other strategies which they had employed and like the headteachers produced an extensive and very varied list which ranged from cultural visits to theatres, cinemas or exhibitions, putting on plays and cooking to using e-mail and video-conferencing. However, almost a third of the teachers who responded (32%) felt that all these strategies had little discernible influence on students' willingness to continue with their modern language learning, although 15% felt that exchanges could revive or strengthen interest in the modern language concerned.

The opportunity to offer a range of languages was the most frequently cited source of satisfaction and nearly three quarters of the teachers surveyed (72%) said they were satisfied with the range of languages they could offer. In response to open-ended questions, teachers focused on diversity of language as an important factor in widening the linguistic experience of students and raising levels of uptake. Over a third of those surveyed (36%) said there had been an increase in the range of languages offered in their school, with Spanish emerging as a popular choice. In 15% of cases, however, there had been a loss of modern language diversity, largely as a result of a vicious circle of a fall in numbers wanting to take a second modern language, failure for a class to run, further fall in interest, loss of qualified teacher in that language and so on.

There were very few instances where principal teachers were willing to attribute declining uptake at Higher in their schools to factors that lay within their control, although the converse was often true. So, of the 22 principal teachers who said that uptake had increased over the last ten years, ten cited improvements within the modern languages department as one of the main reasons for this upturn. Similarly, of the 23 teachers who felt that levels of achievement at Higher in their school had improved over the last ten years, ten attributed this to improvements in the modern languages department and eight mentioned the quality of the teaching staff. When asked to indicate the importance of the quality and calibre of the modern languages teachers in the school as a factor in students' decision to carry on with a Higher, 24% felt it was of major importance and 52% said it was of some importance. However, when asked whether the successful track record of the modern languages department at Higher was an important factor, only 13% felt that this was a major consideration and 38% thought it was of some relevance; 42% felt this was not relevant to students' decisions at all.

6.4 Student perspectives

In the final section of their surveys S4 and S5 students were asked to give their views on language learning at school frankly and in their own words. As part of this section they were invited to say why they thought numbers of students going on to take a modern language at Higher were dropping and what they would do to increase those numbers. Although students were critical of existing provision,

describing it as 'boring' and 'difficult' they were unable to offer clear guidance on improvement. Enhancing the cultural experience emerges as one strategy (primarily through increasing opportunities for exchanges and trips abroad) and some students also felt that more could be done to promote languages.

6.5 Parental perspectives

Of the 55 parents interviewed for the research, 33 (60%) were unaware of the national decline in the numbers of students taking a Higher modern language and many were both surprised and concerned to discover this. Over a third of this group (22% of the total sample) saw a direct connection between the failure at school (as well as at national level) to promote modern languages and encourage students to continue beyond Standard Grade and students' lack of understanding of the value and importance of having a modern language. Over a third of all the parents interviewed (35%) felt that the solution to the problem of uptake lay in greater encouragement of young people to continue with the study of a modern language and in better education about the merits, value and usefulness of a modern language for their future. School guidance staff as well as national government, industry and Higher Education Institutions were singled out as not doing enough to promote and encourage advanced language learning. Parents, for their part, felt that they needed such information so that they too could do their bit in promoting language uptake.

Some parents felt that the students themselves should be consulted about what they would find interesting and others thought that a greater emphasis on the culture and current affairs of the countries concerned would be beneficial. Small numbers mentioned that specific changes to existing provision and to the structure of provision within schools would make a difference. For example, greater choice of modern language (particularly Spanish) was advocated by some, while others thought that clashes with other subjects such as the sciences needed to be resolved. Over a third (36%) believed that the solution lay in changes or improvements to teaching methodology, although there was no consensus about what needed to be changed with some parents favouring greater emphasis on grammar and writing and others suggesting making the learning experience more fun and less pressurised. Some highlighted the need for improved resources and mentioned the quality of teaching staff and textbooks and large class sizes as issues which schools needed to address.

6.6 Summary

1. The researchers set out to identify any characteristics of schools which had succeeded in maintaining or increasing the number of students taking modern language Highers which might explain their success, but no clear pattern emerged from our survey data.
2. This chapter has therefore focused on headteachers' and principal teachers' accounts of attempts to promote modern languages.
3. Many schools have made efforts to address the problem of falling numbers at Higher at both school management and departmental levels, and, in more

general terms, to promote language learning. However, only in a limited number of cases did principal teachers of modern languages or headteachers believe that such efforts had made much impact on the declining numbers at Higher and some felt that nothing that schools could do would make any difference.

4. Widening the range of languages on offer to students at different stages and supporting second modern languages were seen by both principal teachers and headteachers as one of the most useful means of promoting modern languages and of raising levels of interest and uptake. There was, however, a contrary view expressed by a small number of headteachers who felt that diversification watered down the numbers for particular languages at the S3 and S5 stages and undermined the viability of Higher classes in particular.

5. There were few examples of significant extra resources being devoted to promoting languages and raising levels of uptake, with headteachers generally preferring not to make a special case for languages. Nevertheless, it was evident that many schools were coping with the declining uptake by allowing smaller modern language classes at Higher and CSYS than would normally be the case for other subjects. Headteachers who had supported this solution said that the situation could not be maintained indefinitely and Higher Still would probably increase the incidence of bi-level teaching in an attempt to make modern languages classes more viable.

6. Although a small number of headteachers were looking for improvements in the teaching of modern languages, more felt that departments had done everything they could to raise levels of attainment and interest. Principal teachers were even less inclined to attribute the fall in uptake to failures in teaching approaches and performance of modern languages staff although nearly half of those whose schools had maintained or increased numbers going on to Higher thought that improvements in the department had been largely responsible.

7. From their perspectives, however, students and parents were looking to the schools to make language learning more enjoyable and more successful although there was no clear (and sometimes conflicting) advice about how this might be achieved. Parents, in particular, were looking to schools to offer greater encouragement to young people to continue their modern language learning and there is some evidence tnat students also believe that schools (along with other bodies) should promote languages more actively, to make young people aware of the benefits.

7: Conclusions and recommendations

7.1 Conclusions

The aim of this research has been to identify the causes of decline in the uptake of modern languages at Higher. At the outset of the research, a number of possible reasons for the decline were put forward, and these were investigated in the course of the study. Many of these factors proved to be influential. The difficulty is to determine how they are linked, and which are salient.

We put forward here two explanations for the decline which draw on several of the factors we have identified: firstly, the tension between the career-oriented focus of students reaching the end of their secondary school education and the support for language learning in the context of life long learning; and secondly, the 'climate of negativity' which affects language teaching.

Career-orientation and life-long learning

We have seen in the course of this account of the findings from the research that the principal influence on students' choices of subject at Higher is the extent to which the subjects they study will help them achieve their educational and career goals. Students who choose to study languages believe that they will be useful to them in their careers. Students who do not, do so because they believe that other subjects will be more useful. There is a certain calculation in the choices of some students. A modern languages Higher is often held to be a difficult exam, and one which students' experiences of Standard Grade as well as what they hear 'on the grapevine' may suggest carries a certain element of risk, because of the focus on performance on the day (in contrast to examinations with assessed course work elements) and the notion that the subject matter may be unpredictable. At the same time, there is no requirement either in entry to Higher Education or from employers for a qualification in modern languages, and students opt for subjects which appear to be of more immediate relevance.

The fact that fewer and fewer students are taking Highers in modern languages has been interpreted as meaning that they dislike the approach taken to language learning in secondary school and that they are fundamentally uninterested in language learning, as a consequence of the parochialist views on the importance of languages held more widely across Scotland (for example, the notion that there is no need to learn other languages because most foreigners speak English). Our findings are that students are dissatisfied with the Standard Grade course in particular, but that their views are not as strong on this point as might have been anticipated. Moreover they strongly refuted the 'little Scotlander' view and made clear that they were interested in learning about other cultures and in communicating with people from other countries, through other languages. Many students recognised the potential for travelling, studying and working abroad that competence in another language would support. However, for them, these possibilities were in the future and their immediate focus is on gaining access to

higher education or to the careers they seek, rather than on what they might do once they have embarked on a degree or a career.

Students' views on the cultural value of language learning were supported by their parents who, in a sense, might be regarded as representing wider Scottish society in this study. Their parents were strongly convinced of the cultural benefits and, from their viewpoint as adults with experience of study and work, the opportunities available (and of those they themselves had missed), were conscious of the advantages which competence in a modern language might bring their children at a later stage in their careers, as well as more general benefits. Many of the parents we interviewed were dismayed to hear of the decline in uptake of modern languages at Higher and several of those whose children had decided not to continue language studies mentioned that they had attempted to convince them of the long-term benefits. (However, parents were also aware of the short-term reasons for not taking languages.) These parents felt that there should be more action at national level to promote language learning and that their efforts might have been more successful if there were clearer messages from schools and those with a responsibility for education about the importance of languages in the context of life-long learning.

The 'climate of negativity'

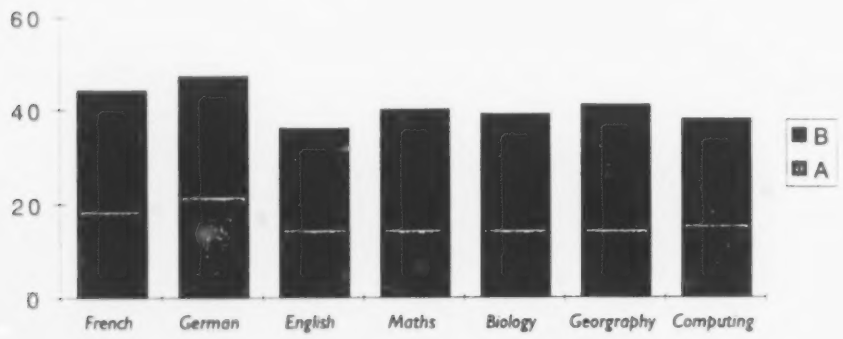
Our second explanation for the decline focuses on what we term the 'climate of negativity' surrounding the teaching of modern languages. Features of this include:

- examiners' comments that standards of performance at Higher are not high
- PTs' views that students are not interested in the subject and that most are not capable
- students' view that languages are boring and difficult - in particular the dislike of grammar
- a more general social view that learning languages is difficult and tedious
- no strong belief in the instrumental value of language learning.

We suggest that this view that languages are difficult, tedious, poorly learnt and not particularly useful represents a vicious 'spiral' in which these negative perceptions feed off each other and become increasingly intense. It may be very difficult to break through the circle and dispel these perceptions.

Starting with the examiners' comments, which we saw in Chapter 1, these have tended to be fairly critical in recent years, in particular of students' writing abilities at Standard Grade and of translation and writing skills (including their ability to express themselves in English at Higher). We cannot know the reasons behind this critical stance. Given that the number of 'A' and 'B' passes at Higher is high compared with other subjects (see Figure 7.1 below), this phenomenon suggests that although candidates are performing well in relation to the examination, examiners may be making mental comparisons with some other, much higher standard, against which many are failing.

Figure 7.1 Percentage of candidates gaining 'A' or 'B' passes at Higher in 1998 ('All school' candidates)



What we are concerned with here is the effect such comments are likely to have on teachers. We know from our data and from other sources that teachers find the job of preparing candidates for Higher exams in modern languages a demanding task for a variety of reasons. In particular we know that they have doubts about students' ability to bridge the gap between Standard Grade and Higher, covering the grammatical ground needed within a short period of time. Receiving such comments from the examiners is likely to reinforce their view that there is a deep-rooted problem with student performance at Higher, reflected back to us in their belief that Higher is a difficult exam to do well in (whereas in fact it is more difficult to gain 'A' or 'B' passes in other 'competitor' subjects).

This view is then passed on to students, their families and others. Students report being discouraged from taking languages at Higher because the exam is 'too difficult'. It is likely that teachers convey their misgivings about the course in a range of other unintended ways, leading to pupil perceptions that teachers are unenthusiastic about the subject and that the subject itself is 'boring'. These views are reflected back to teachers, who conclude that students are uninterested and incompetent. This negativity about the subject is then, inevitably, transmitted outwards into wider society, where the notion that languages are difficult and tedious to learn, and that standards among school students and among the public generally are low is now a commonplace of conversation and media articles.

What is rarely perceived in this vicious 'spiral' is that the standards which everyone deplores are relative. There are a number of unanswered questions which require our attention before such judgements can be made. It may be the case that impossibly high standards are being set for competence in modern languages among S4 and S5 students. If so, it is a matter of some urgency that a degree of realism is introduced into the discussion. Questions to which we believe there are currently no answers, or only partial answers, include the following:

- Are the standards achieved by those who have sat Standard Grade exams in modern languages in Scotland comparable with those achieved by 16 year olds in other European countries (in particular those in which the main modern languages learnt in Scotland are spoken)?

- Are the standards achieved by those who have studied modern languages for 4-6 years (or approximately 400 hours) comparable with those who have spent similar amounts of time in language learning in other countries?
- Are the standards achieved by 16 year olds in Scotland comparable with those achieved by students of a similar age in other European countries in languages other than English?

Underlying these questions are a number of structural and cultural issues, such as the age at which children start learning another language in other European countries, the amount of time dedicated to language learning in school time, and the high motivation speakers of other languages have for learning English, in contrast to other European languages. Despite the difficulties of making comparisons, however, we need some measure by which we can 'objectively' assess the achievements of the current system, establish what our legitimate expectations might be, and ensure that students have a clear idea of what is expected and what can be achieved. We have seen that students judged to be competent by their teachers do not themselves feel confident about the language skills they have acquired. It appears that they too have unrealistic expectations of what they could or should have achieved and that the gap between what is possible by the time students have reached Standard Grade and their aspirations (native-like fluency?) leads them to perceive the subject negatively.

This lack of confidence among competent students is the most serious consequence of the 'climate of negativity'. It is clear that most S4 students will not go on to take modern languages at Higher, for the reasons set out in the previous section on career-orientation. However, many might return to language learning at a later stage, when the educational or career benefits become more obvious, or because they have cultural reasons for wishing to speak another language. The chances of this happening are much reduced if students' views, as adults, are that competence in a modern language is, theoretically, a valuable life-skill, but that in practice learning a language is tedious and, in any case, they were not really 'good at languages' when they were at school.

7.2 Recommendations

Our research suggests that a number of steps could be taken to improve the uptake of modern languages at Higher by school staff (in particular principal teachers of modern languages, guidance staff and senior managers), by local authorities, and by the various national bodies concerned to promote higher attainment in modern languages in Scotland (including the Scottish Qualifications Authority, the Scottish Consultative Council on the Curriculum and Her Majesty's Inspectors). For each of the areas listed below, it is important to bear in mind that changes are suggested in the light of our conclusions, namely:

- that S4 students' choices for Higher are influenced primarily by their immediate educational and career goals

- that there is a need to establish clear and realistic expectations of student attainment at the end of their four to six years of compulsory modern language study, while ensuring that the course is intellectually challenging.

Course structure

While our research has focused on the reasons why students choose not to study modern languages at Higher, and therefore principally on the nature of modern languages courses for students in S3 and S4, leading up to Standard Grade examinations, in the broadest terms, 'the course' needs to be seen as the six years of compulsory modern language learning, from P6 to S4. The students whose experiences we have surveyed in this research were affected in various ways by recent changes to modern languages provision - notably the 5–14 curriculum guidelines and the introduction of Modern Languages in the Primary School - which are still in the process of being implemented across Scotland. Some of the difficulties, contradictions or breaks in continuity which some students experienced are likely to be resolved as these initiatives become established. At the same time, teachers do not currently appear to have a clear overview of the six year course or to have developed effective strategies to ensure continuity and progression. The lack of an overview, in our view, contributes to the climate of negativity discussed above and to the difficulty of establishing realistic expectations of student attainment at the end of the six year course.

For these reasons, we recommend that:

(1) national bodies develop a coherent framework for the six year course, to support continuity and progression from P7 to S1 and from S2 to S3, as students move on from 5–14 to preparation for Standard Grade;

(2) in recognition of the fact that S4 will continue to represent the end of modern languages study for most students (even if the decline in uptake at Higher is halted and numbers begin to rise again), national bodies need to establish clear and realistic expectations of what students should be able to do with the language(s) they have studied, given the time and the resources available; in this context, we commend the practice of Carleton Board of Education in Canada which provides precise (but easily understandable) descriptions of the different levels of skill which students will acquire in French, depending on the type of immersion course in which their parents choose to enrol them (examples are included in Appendix C); a useful starting point for this process might be the Council of Europe Frameworks document which identifies levels of competence in foreign languages and the amount of time needed to acquire them;

(3) these expectations are widely publicised so that students, parents and others with an interest in promoting modern languages in Scotland have a clear idea of the value - and the limitations - of a Standard Grade qualification; in our view, publicising these expectations could stimulate debate about appropriate standards of linguistic competence, make clear that the acquisition of

language skills is cumulative, and establish more clearly the benefits of continuing language learning for one more year, to Higher grade (particularly if a separate set of expectations of attainment were established, showing the differences in outcome between Standard Grade and Higher);

(4) if, in the debate around the establishment of these expectations, it emerges that aspects of the current Standard Grade examination are not entirely consonant, changes may need to be made to the examination, bearing in mind that it represents, for most students an 'end point' to their modern language studies.

Throughout our research, teachers have consistently pointed to the lack of articulation between the demands and emphases of the Standard Grade examination and those of the Higher. One of the principal differences lies in the status of writing in the modern language which is optional for Standard Grade, even at Credit level, but a key feature of the Higher examination. The fact that the writing examination is optional is likely to discourage students from sitting the examination, even if they are capable. Yet without a Credit pass in writing, students' chances of gaining good grades at Higher are significantly reduced: HMI's own analysis of examination statistics demonstrate that an award at Credit level writing provides the best predictor of success at Higher in foreign languages with 80% of students gaining such an award going on to achieve a good pass at Higher (a successful conversion rate comparable with other subjects). For those students without a credit writing award but with a credit level pass, the conversion rate falls to only 35%. We therefore recommend that:

(5) serious consideration be given to the optional status of writing at Standard Grade, particularly for Credit level pupils, in order to maximise their chances of a good grade at Higher; if, in consequence the curricular design for Standard Grade courses needs to be rethought, the existing model for general science and the separate sciences might be considered as a potential starting point.

Course content

In the course of this report, we have seen that students were critical of the content of the S3 and S4 modern languages course. Four main negative factors were identified:

- the 'self-oriented' curriculum
- excessive emphasis on grammar and 'disembodied' vocabulary, and, in particular, the rote learning associated with this
- the lack of an intellectual challenge

Students would have liked to have had more opportunities to:

- see themselves as adult users of the language, in work-related or personal contexts
- learn more about the culture of the country whose language they were studying.

Changes to the content of the S3/4 course may come about as a result of the review of expectations discussed above. However, modern languages teachers clearly have an important role to play in determining the precise focus of what is taught, and we therefore recommend that:

(6) teachers seek to enhance work-related elements within the S3 and S4 courses, ranging from a greater emphasis on role playing in various 'professional' contexts within the modern language class to developing linked courses with 'professional' subjects such as business studies, computing, technology, etc;

(7) teachers seek to enhance cultural elements in the S3 and S4 course; we interpret 'culture' in the widest sense, from aspects of daily life in other countries to sport, film, music or art; bearing in mind that students expect to visit the countries whose languages they have been studying as adults, the focus should not be exclusively on teenage experiences (eg school in another country) or culture (eg popular music);

(8) teachers consider ways of making language learning intellectually stimulating, particularly for able students; apart from enhancing the 'professional' and cultural elements of the course, which could, in themselves, go some way to meeting this aim, one suggestion we would make is that such students might benefit from an approach to grammar in the form of what might be termed an introduction to linguistics, which would focus on the reasons why grammar is important as well as the particular points students need to acquire for the language they are learning; (other suggestions for dealing with 'resistance' to grammar are listed in the following section on teaching strategies).

It is inevitable that the demands of the examination play a large part in determining how and what teachers teach in their Standard Grade courses. If teachers are to review the content of their courses along the lines recommended above, we recommend that:

(9) SQA examinations support any increased emphasis on cultural and work-related elements in the Standard Grade course by including such content in the examination papers set.

Teaching methods

The research drew attention to some mismatches between teachers' strategies for improving language teaching and students' views on classroom practice. Some teachers, for example, were considering moving to more whole class teaching, while, in some cases, students argued that they were excessively dependent on the teacher, in comparison with other subjects. Similarly, while some teachers were planning to increase the amount of grammar taught in S3 and S4, students gave 'boring' grammar work as one of the main reasons behind their decision not to continue with modern languages in S5. We stress, as we have throughout the report, that these findings relate to teachers' and students' perceptions of what

happens in the classroom and are not based on data collected through classroom observation. Our recommendations in this context thus need to be seen as more tentative: further research into classroom practice and its impact on student learning is needed.

We suggest that:

(10) teachers seek to discover what their students think about the diverse aspects of learning a foreign language at school; our research shows clearly that there was a mis-match of perception between teachers and their students on key aspects such as 'grammar', 'intellectual challenge' and 'use of the foreign language';

(11) teachers consider ways of helping students to develop autonomous learning skills; this is a feature of other subjects at S3/4 level and such a focus in modern languages would help to bring the subject into line with others, capitalising on the skills students are acquiring elsewhere; we have noted elsewhere that students lack an awareness of the foreign language resources available to them (such as books, newspapers and magazines, films, videos and CD-Roms, music, Internet sites) and the skills which would enable them to use their language skills independently of the teacher: developing students' skills in this regard would enhance their chances of coming into contact with 'real' language and of developing, in particular, the so-called 'passive' language skills (ie listening and reading) for which there is often limited time in the classroom;

(12) teachers review current work on language acquisition which identifies a variety of approaches to the teaching - and learning - of grammar and vocabulary and also look at current practice in this area in Teaching English as a Foreign Language (TEFL) where there has been a powerful (financial) incentive to develop effective and entertaining teaching methods; it may be appropriate to focus quite explicitly on language learning strategies and to ask students to experiment, for example, with different ways of learning vocabulary and then to evaluate them;

(13) teachers of modern languages and of English, in both secondary and primary schools aim to develop a more coherent and shared view of the place of grammar on pupils' learning; our research clearly indicates the absence of a shared view across students and teachers of modern languages in S3-S5; we suggest that this is a whole-school issue which deserves to be tackled much earlier in pupils' school careers;

(14) local authorities and national bodies encourage teachers to review their practice and develop a wider range of teaching methods, and support this through appropriate in-service provision.

Resources

The research suggests a need to review the teaching materials and other resources used, to ensure that students have adequate reference materials and that they have

as many opportunities as possible to engage more with 'real' examples of the foreign language (in particular to communicate with native speakers of the language). Accordingly, we recommend that:

(15) all students in S3 and S4 have suitable reference materials which they can take home and refer to as needed; these may be in the form of text-books with appropriate reference sections or materials produced by the modern languages department; it is important that the reference materials students have available are well organised for independent study and revision;

(16) sources of 'real' examples of the foreign language are available to the students: these include authentic written materials, films and video, Internet sites and multi-media sources; in a written submission to the project, a school librarian commented on the absence of suitable foreign language materials for school libraries: modern languages teachers and others (such as the French Institute, Goethe Institute, etc.) could review materials available in the countries of the languages taught in schools that could be included in a school library collection;

(17) all opportunities for contact with native speakers are actively promoted; currently, opportunities for students to work with modern languages assistants, or to go on visits or exchanges to the countries whose languages they are studying, are being reduced, for reasons of cost: schools and education authorities need to assess the impact of such cuts on student uptake of modern languages at Higher and, more generally, on student interest or enthusiasm for language learning; alternatives to the established approaches include organising work experience abroad and developing links with schools in other countries via e-mail, telephone and video conferencing.

Some of our recommendations entail a substantial increase in the resources available to support modern language teaching. In this context, we note that figures quoted in the current Nuffield Inquiry consultation document (Moys 1998:37) suggest that schools in Scotland are significantly less well funded for modern languages than those in other parts of the UK. Modern languages teachers, senior management within schools, and local authority representatives need to engage in debate about the goals of modern language teaching and the resources needed to achieve them.

Marketing and guidance

The research suggests that modern language teachers have, for various reasons, been cautious about promoting modern languages at Higher, because of the widely held view that only the most able students can cope with the Higher course. At the same time, as we have seen, able students are being encouraged to take subjects other than languages (particularly sciences). We recommend that:

(18) modern languages departments review entry criteria for Higher courses, to ensure that they are not unnecessarily restrictive;

(19) modern languages departments review provision for 'middle ability' students in S5 and S6, particularly in the context of Higher Still, which may provide more opportunities for students to progress to Higher over two years or to continue language learning, perhaps in the service of a 'vocational' or 'professional' subject area in the last two years of school;

(20) modern languages departments become more actively involved in the promotion of their own subject, to counter 'competition' from other subjects, focusing both on the potential of languages to support and enhance study in a variety of areas in Higher Education (see the section on Higher Education below) or in career development, and on the value of languages from a life-long learning perspective (see the section on life-long learning below).

From our research, it appears that guidance teachers typically adopt a 'neutral' stance in relation to subject choices. This approach may work against uptake of languages at Higher if students themselves focus on their immediate goals of entry into higher education or to the career of their choice, while higher education institutions and employers appear rarely to specify competence in a modern language as an entry requirement. At the same time, both higher education and employers' representatives recognise the longer term value of competence in a foreign language. We recommend that:

(21) guidance teachers' attention is drawn to changing patterns of modern language teaching in higher education, where languages are now often linked to 'professional' subjects such as business studies, accountancy, law, etc. and where extensive opportunities for study and work experience in Europe are now available;

(22) guidance teachers are encouraged to see the world of work within Europe rather than just within Scotland as their remit and to consider the value of competence in foreign languages in the context of labour mobility across Europe.

Higher education and employers

There is no evidence from the research that either admissions tutors for higher education or employers view a Higher in a modern language as more valuable than Highers in other subjects for entry into higher education or into work. At the same time, there is recognition of competence in a foreign language as a useful skill on which students or employees may draw at various times in the course of their higher education or of their careers. We recommend that:

(23) modern languages teachers and guidance staff ensure that they are well informed of the opportunities for using languages for study or work experience abroad, in the context both of higher education and of careers of interest to school students, and that they pass this information on to students;

(24) 'role models' (adults who use languages in the course of their work) are sought at local and national level to encourage students to become aware of

the long-term value of achieving and maintaining competence in a foreign language;

(25) bodies with an interest in promoting labour mobility within Europe encourage higher education institutions and employers' organisations to publicise opportunities for study and work abroad in their recruitment literature, pointing out the value of competence in a foreign language for those considering taking them up.

National perspectives

The 'climate of negativity' discussed at the start of this chapter is prominent at national level in Scotland. While we were engaged on the research, a number of articles in the media focused on the poor linguistic skills of Scottish school students and of the population generally. It is a commonplace of daily discussion that anglophones are poor language learners and the view that little can be done to change this situation is widespread. We can begin to tackle these national perceptions through establishing clear and realistic expectations of student attainment in modern languages at the end of compulsory language study, as discussed above; but more could be done to change our perceptions of ourselves as linguistically incompetent parochialists.

We recommend that:

(26) those promoting modern languages within the education system could be encouraged to think more creatively about language learning and innovative forms of provision, particularly for the secondary sector; in the course of other research work on which members of the team have been engaged, we have come across

- a wide range of 'immersion' style approaches
- the development of effective strategies for using ICT and multimedia resources
- experimental approaches to language learning and teaching in the classroom in many European countries, including England, but little or no published data on comparable developments in Scotland;

(27) further research into successful language teaching approaches - and publicity for these to counter current negativity.

This last recommendation raises the role of the media. Media exposure to other languages is one of the principal ways in which school students, and adults generally, in other European countries learn languages: in countries such as the Netherlands and Scandinavia, more than half the exposure to foreign languages for school students is outwith the classroom. Closer to home, it is clear that the provision of television in Welsh and Gaelic has had a notable impact on levels of interest and increased competence in these languages. We recommend that:

(28) television companies are encouraged (possibly through the conditions attached to broadcasting licences) to show more films and other programmes

in European languages with subtitles (particularly as such provision is known to help students of these languages develop their skills with little conscious effort, but also, more generally, to increase awareness of other European cultures); the development of digital TV may support this;

(29) newspapers are encouraged to publish brief articles in other languages, in the style currently adopted by *The Guardian* Education section or *The Scotsman's* articles in Gaelic; these articles would be of current significance (from other European newspapers) but would also provide support (eg translation of key vocabulary and phrases) for learners of the language;

(30) an enterprising television company buys in or develops its own soap opera in French (the language most Scots have studied) or Spanish (the language many would like to study), again with subtitles, to promote popular interest in 'everyday life' in other countries and possibly to demonstrate what is shared as well as what is different across Europe; educational material could be developed to tie in with the programmes (although there is an argument for developing a series which teachers would deplore, in order to increase audiences; for the same reason, a mixture of adult and teenage story lines are likely to attract viewers).

Promotion of life-long modern language learning

Finally, we focus on the value of modern language skills for life-long learning. We have seen from the research that students and their parents were aware of the longer-term value of competence in a foreign language, and that higher education and employers recognise the usefulness of language skills throughout students' educational careers and on into the world of work. Moreover, in the current context of developing ties with Europe, it is important that young people in particular are alerted to the potential for careers which span several countries, and that they are prepared to take advantage of the available opportunities, when they come. We recommend that:

(31) modern languages teachers and those responsible for developing the modern language course structure and examinations systems recognise the importance of a positive end point for students completing the six years of compulsory language study, emphasising what has been achieved (ie students should not end their language study feeling that they have failed to learn the language or that they are not 'good at' languages) and drawing attention to the possibilities for returning to language study in the future: these include the range of school-based provision, for Higher, modules, and new courses in the context of Higher Still, general and specialist provision (eg languages for business, languages for science) provision in FE and HE, and community and adult education courses.

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Appendix A

A-1: Research methods
A-2: Principal teacher interview schedule (preliminary phase)
A-3: Pupil group interview schedules: pupils S2, S3, S4 and S5 (preliminary phase)
A-4: 'Thinking notes': open-ended pupil questionnaire (preliminary phase)
A-5: Headteacher interview schedule (preliminary phase)
A-6: Guidance teacher interview schedule (preliminary phase)
A-7: Interview schedule for timetablers (preliminary phase)

Research methods

The research on which this study was based involved two phases of data collection and analysis. In the preliminary phase, twelve 'case study' schools were selected following a study of statistical data provided by the SEB (Scottish Examination Board) relating to uptake of Modern Languages at Higher across Scotland. The 'case study' schools thus included schools whose pattern of presentation of candidates for Modern Languages Highers indicated that they mirrored the national decline, and schools who had managed either to maintain numbers of Modern Languages Highers candidates in the face of decline or to increase numbers.

In each of the case study schools, researchers interviewed Headteachers, guidance staff, timetablers, Principal Teachers of Modern Languages and students from S2, S3, S4 and S5. Students were interviewed in groups, and also asked to complete a brief questionnaire.

The data collected from this preliminary phase was analysed primarily with a view to shaping the surveys used in main phase of the research, although points which emerged from the preliminary phase have been used to illustrate issues emerging from the surveys where appropriate.

The second phase consisted of a survey sent to a random 25% sample of Scottish secondary schools, seeking the views of

- Principal Teachers of Modern Languages
- a 25% sample of S4 students who were about to take Credit level exams at Standard Grade in Modern Languages
- a 25% sample of S5 students who had taken Credit level exams at Standard Grade in Modern Languages (whether or not they had continued studying Modern Languages in S5)
- Headteachers

In addition, the twelve 'case study' schools also took part in the survey.

In all, 113 schools were invited to take part, of which 100 returned questionnaires from Principal Teachers and S4 and S5 students (a response rate of 89%). 54 Headteachers returned completed survey forms.

In the course of the study, the researchers also interviewed 55 parents (of S5 students in the 'case study' schools) by telephone and conducted a telephone survey of a range of employers, followed by more detailed telephone interviews with ten employers.

Survey data from the Principal Teachers of Modern Languages and from the S4 and S5 students was analysed quantitatively, using SPSS.

Headteacher, parent and business data was summarised quantitatively by hand, and studied in some more detail from a qualitative perspective.

Appendix A includes the full set of data collection instruments, except for the Principal Teacher, S4 and S5 student surveys which are included in Appendix B, where the frequencies of responses are presented.

INTERVIEW SCHEDULE, PRINCIPAL TEACHERS PRELIMINARY PHASE

SOME PRACTICALITIES

PT01. How many staff are there in the modern languages department? *

PT02. Which modern foreign languages does the school offer at SG? *

PT03. Which modern foreign languages does the school offer at HG? *

PT04. Does the school offer (SCOTVEC) modules in foreign languages? If so,
- to which year groups?
- in which languages?
- at which levels? *

PT05. Does the school offer any year groups opportunities for non-accredited foreign language learning? (If so, what? e.g. language club) *

UPTAKE OF MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

PT06. How many of **this year's S5** are taking one or more **foreign language modules** this year? (Ascertain S5 roll) *

PT07. (a) What proportion is being presented for **Higher foreign languages**?

(b) About how many are taking more than one Higher in foreign languages? *

PT08. How many pupils are there in **this year's S4**? *

PT09. a) Are they all studying at least one modern foreign language **to SG level**? (If not, could you explain why?)

b) Which language is the most common? *

PT10. How many pupils are studying more than one? *

PT11. Judging by modern foreign language uptake over the past three years, what proportion of **this year's S4** pupils would you expect to study one or more modern languages at **Higher level?** *

PT12. Does this level of uptake satisfy you? (Why do you say this?) *

PERCEPTION OF REASONS FOR UPTAKE

PT13. (a) What has been the trend of uptake of FL at Higher level in this school over the past five years?

static
uptake declining
uptake increasing

(b) Can you suggest reasons for this? *

PT14. Why, do you think, do pupils choose NOT to study FLs at Higher level? (What do they study instead?)

enthusiasm lost by S4
dislike of composite classes
dissatisfaction with course materials and courses
dislike of teaching methods experienced at SG
perception of discontinuity between SG and HG
no interest in foreign cultures
timetable clashes
restricted choice of languages
conflicting university entry requirements
foreign language difficult
languages time consuming *

PT15. Why do they CHOOSE to study FL at Higher level??

university requirement
overall school course balance
membership of the EU
improved career /employment opportunities
mobility within Europe
interest in language generally
interest in going abroad
possibility of direct communication with foreigners
increased status when abroad
enjoyment *

PERCEPTION OF VALUE OF LEARNING MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

PT16. How useful do you feel it is for pupils that all are now expected to study a foreign language at SG? (Why?) *

PT17. How important do you personally think it is that pupils should study foreign languages? (Why do you think this?) *

SCHOOL POLICY AND STRATEGIES

PT18. What strategies are currently being used in the school to foster interest in foreign languages learning in pupils? (How successful are they)*

PT19. Does the school try to ensure that language learning begun in primary schools is continued here? (If so, how far is this possible? How is this managed? If not, why not?) *

PT20. (a) In S2, what opportunities does the school policy on foreign languages give to pupils wanting to take modern foreign languages to SG? (What constraints are there, and why are they necessary?)

(b) How might the opportunities be improved? *

PT21. (a) In S4, what opportunities does the school policy on foreign languages give to pupils wanting to take modern foreign languages to HG? (What constraints are there, and why are they necessary?)

(b) How might the opportunities be improved? *

FOREIGN LANGUAGES IN THE FUTURE

PT22. Do you think the introduction of Higher Still is likely to change school policy and practice in foreign language provision? (In what way?)

broader/ narrower range of languages offered
collaboration with other schools in language provision
increased use of new technology in language provision
increase in uptake of languages modules
changes in the numbers of pupils taking up foreign languages in S5
more composite classes
changes in language staff complement *

PT23. How far do you see it as desirable what the school should
(a) broaden the range of modern foreign languages offered at SG and Higher level?

(b) attract more young people into modern foreign languages at Higher level? *

PT24. What would be needed to make either of these things happen? *

PT25. Would you like to see any changes in the way that modern foreign languages are
(a) **offered** in the school? What changes? Why would you like to see them?

(b) **taught** in the school? What changes? Why would you like to see them? *

PT26. What would be needed to make either of these things happen? *

PT27. Is there anything else you would like to add about modern foreign language provision or uptake in the school? *

Many thanks, both for your time and your trouble
All the information you have given us will be treated in the utmost confidence

INTERVIEW SCHEDULE FOR S2 PUPILS PRELIMINARY PHASE

PRELIMINARIES

S201. Do any of you speak another language?

S202. Which FLs are you studying?

0
1 F G S I
2 F G S I

S203. (a) Have any of you ever been to [country of studied FL]?

(b) Have any of you ever been abroad?

(c) Have any of you ever tried out some [studied FL] on a native speaker?
(Circumstances)

FUTURE INTENTIONS

S204. (a) Have you already chosen your subjects for S3?

(b) Has anybody helped you make your choice?

parents
siblings
peers
guidance staff
subject teachers
form teacher

(c) Whose advice helped you most?

parents
siblings
peers
guidance staff
subject teachers
form teacher

S205. (a) Are any of you going to drop your FL in S3?
Why?

no interest in FLs
too difficult
dislike course content
dislike teacher
studied it long enough
not useful
timetable constraints
followed advice

(b) Would any of you like to drop your FL?
Why?

no interest in FLs
too difficult
dislike course content
dislike teacher
studied it long enough
not useful
timetable constraints
followed advice

S206. Are any of you going to change your FL?
Why?

other FL easier
other FL more interesting
other FL more useful
more possibility of contact with other FL
better extracurricular programme in other FL
studied present FL long enough
dislike present teacher
timetable constraints
followed advice

S207. Are any of you going to start an extra FL?
Why?

enjoyment
new FL easier
new FL more interesting
new FL more useful
more possibility of contact with other FL
better extracurricular programme in new FL
better FE / HE / employment opportunities
followed advice

S208. If you're not sure yet whether you'll drop or change your FL, or take up an extra FL, how will you come to a decision (what will your decision depend on)?

SATISFACTION WITH CURRENT FL STUDY

S209. (a) Do you enjoy your FL course?

(b) What things do you like about it?

course content
teaching methods
composition of class
workload
teacher

(c) What things do you not like about it?

course content
teaching methods
composition of class
workload
teacher

(d) Is there anything in particular your teachers do that helps you learn [the FL]?

(e) Is there anything in particular your teachers do that you don't find helpful for learning [the FL]?

S210. (a) Did any of you do a foreign language at Primary school?
If yes:
(b) Which language?

(c) When did you start? P4 P5 P6 P7

(d) Did you do the same FL when you came to this school?

(e) How do the FL classes you get here compare with what you did at Primary?

less enjoyable / more enjoyable
less interesting / more interesting
harder / easier
learn less / learn more
materials not as good / materials better

PERCEPTION OF VALUE OF FOREIGN LANGUAGE STUDY

S211. (a) Do you think knowing a FL could be useful to you one day?

(b) If so, in what ways?

employment
FE / HE options
travel, mobility
holidays abroad
dealing with tourists

If not, why not?

(c) Did you think that when you first came to Secondary?

If not, what made you change your mind?

ANYTHING ELSE

S212. Is there anything else you would like to say about foreign languages in the school?

Many thanks, both for your time and your trouble
All the information you have given us will be treated in the utmost confidence

INTERVIEW SCHEDULE FOR S3 PUPILS PRELIMINARY PHASE

PRELIMINARIES

S301. Do any of you speak another language?

*

S302. Which FLs are you studying?

0				
1	F	G	S	I
2	F	G	S	I
3	F	G	S	I

*

S303. (a) Have any of you ever been to [country of studied FL]?

(b) Have any of you ever been abroad?

(c) Have any of you ever tried out some [studied FL] on a native speaker? (Circumstances)

MAKING CHOICES

S304. (a) How did you decide which subjects to choose for Standard Grade?

*

(b) Did anybody help you make your choice?

parents
siblings
peers
guidance staff
subject teachers
form teacher

(c) Whose advice helped you most?

parents
siblings
peers
guidance staff
subject teachers
form teacher

QUESTIONS S305 AND S306 TO BE ASKED ONLY IN SCHOOLS NOT IMPLEMENTING A 'LANGUAGES FOR ALL' POLICY

S305. (a) Did any of you drop FLs when you moved into S3?

(b) Why?

no interest in FLs
too difficult
disliked course content
disliked teacher
had studied it long enough
not useful
timetable constraints
followed advice*

S306. Why did those of you who are still doing a FL choose to carry it on into S3?

enjoyment
previous success
to keep FE / HE / employment options open
HE entrance requirement
extracurricular opportunities (trips etc)
timetable constraints
followed advice

SATISFACTION WITH CURRENT FL STUDY

S307. (a) Are you enjoying your FL course?

(b) What things do you like about it?

course content
teaching methods
composition of class
workload
teacher

(c) What things do you not like about it?

course content
teaching methods
composition of class
workload
teacher

(d) Is there anything in particular your teachers do that helps you learn [the FL]?

(e) Is there anything in particular your teachers do that you don't find helpful for learning [the FL]?

(f) How does this year's FL course compare with what you did in S1-S2?

much the same
less enjoyable / more enjoyable
less interesting / more interesting
harder / easier
learn less / learn more
materials not as good / materials better

PERCEPTION OF VALUE OF FOREIGN LANGUAGE STUDY

S308. (a) Do you think knowing a FL could be useful to you one day?

(b) If so, in what ways?

employment
FE / HE options
travel, mobility
holidays abroad
dealing with tourists

If not, why not?

(c) Did you think that when you first came to Secondary?

If not, what made you change your mind?

ANYTHING ELSE

S309. Is there anything else you would like to say about foreign languagesin the school?

Many thanks, both for your time and your trouble
All the information you have given us will be treated in the utmost confidence

INTERVIEW SCHEDULE FOR S4 PUPILS PRELIMINARY PHASE

PRELIMINARIES

S401. Do any of you speak another language?

S402. Which FLs if any are you sitting at Standard Grade?

0				
1	F	G	S	I
2	F	G	S	I
3	F	G	S	I

S403. (a) Have any of you ever been to [country of studied FL]?

(b) Have any of you ever been abroad?

(c) Have any of you ever tried out some [studied FL] on a native speaker? (Circumstances)

FUTURE INTENTIONS

S404. (a) Have any of you decided which subjects you want to continue at Higher level (if you get the Standard Grade results you want)?

(b) Has anybody helped you make your choice?

parents
siblings
peers
guidance staff
subject teachers
form teacher

(c) Whose advice helped you most?

parents
siblings
peers
guidance staff
subject teachers
form teacher

S405. (a) Do any of you intend doing [your FL] at Higher level?

(b) If yes, why?

enjoyment
success
easier Higher than others
timetable constraints
HE entrance requirement
better FE / HE / employment options
followed advice

If not, why not?

Higher will be too difficult
not needed for HE entrance
other subjects have priority
timetable constraints
have studied FL long enough
FLs not useful
dissatisfied with SG course
dislike teacher
followed advice

S406. (a) Will any of you take another FL at Standard Grade level in S5?

(b) Why?

enjoyment
other FL more interesting
other FL more useful
more possibility of contact with other FL
better FE / HE / employment options
followed advice

S407. (a) Will any of you take modules in another FL?

(b) Why?

enjoyment
other FL more interesting
other FL more useful
more possibility of contact with other FL
better FE/ HE / employment options
prefer modular courses
timetable constraints
followed advice

S408. If you're not yet sure what you'll be doing in S5, how will you decide (what will your decision depend on)?

SATISFACTION WITH CURRENT FL STUDY

S409. (a) Are you enjoying your Standard Grade FL course?

(b) What things do you like about it?

course content
teaching methods
composition of class
workload
teacher

(c) What things do you <u>not</u> like about it?

course content
teaching methods
composition of class
workload
teacher

(d) Is there anything in particular your teachers do that helps you learn [the FL]?

(e) Is there anything in particular your teachers do that you <u>don't</u> find helpful for learning [the FL]?

(f) How does your FL course this year compare with what you did in S3?

much the same
less enjoyable / more enjoyable
less interesting / more interesting
harder / easier
learn less / learn more
materials not as good / materials better

in S1-S2?

much the same
less enjoyable / more enjoyable
less interesting / more interesting
harder / easier
learn less / learn more
materials not as good / materials better

PERCEPTION OF VALUE OF FOREIGN LANGUAGE STUDY

S410. (a) Do you think knowing a FL will be useful to you one day?

(b) If so, in what ways?

employment
FE / HE options
travel, mobility
holidays
speaking to tourists
further education options

If not, why not?

(c) Did you think that when you first came to Secondary?

If not, what made you change your mind?

ANYTHING ELSE

S412. Is there anything else you would like to say about foreign languagesin the school?

Many thanks, both for your time and your trouble
All the information you have given us will be treated in the utmost confidence

INTERVIEW SCHEDULE FOR S5 PUPILS PRELIMINARY PHASE

PRELIMINARIES

S501. Do any of you speak another language?

S502. Which FLs if any are you sitting at Higher Grade?

0
1 F G S I
2 F G S I
3 F G S I

S503. (a) Have any of you ever been to [country of studied FL]?

(b) Have any of you ever been abroad?

(c) Have any of you ever tried out some [studied FL] on a native speaker? (Circumstances)

MAKING CHOICES

S504. (a) How did you decide which subjects to choose for Higher?

(b) Did anybody help you make your choice?

parents
siblings
peers
guidance staff
subject teachers
form teacher

(c) Whose advice helped you most?

parents
siblings
peers
guidance staff
subject teachers
form teacher

S505. (a) If you are sitting a Higher in a FL, why did you choose to do this Higher?

enjoyment
previous success
easier Higher than others
HE entrance requirement
better HE / employment options
followed advice

(b) If you are <u>not</u> sitting a Higher in any FL, why did you drop your FL after Standard Grade?

Higher too difficult
not needed for HE entrance
other subjects had priority
timetable constraints
had studied FL long enough
FLs not useful
dissatisfied with SG course
disliked teacher
followed advice

S506. (a) Are any of you taking another FL at Standard Grade level?

(b) Why did you choose this other FL course?

enjoyment
new FL more interesting
new FL more useful
more possibility of contact with new FL
better FE/ HE / employment options
followed advice

S507. (a) Are any of you taking modules in another FL?

(b) Why did you choose this modular course?

enjoyment
new FL more interesting
new FL more useful
more possibility of contact with new FL
better FE/ HE / employment options
prefer modular courses
timetable constraints
followed advice

SATISFACTION WITH CURRENT FL STUDY

S508. (a) Are you enjoying your Higher FL course?

(b) What things do you like about it?

course content
teaching methods
composition of class
workload
teacher

(c) What things do you <u>not</u> like about it?

course content
teaching methods
composition of class
workload
teacher

(d) Is there anything in particular your teachers do that helps you learn [the FL]?

(e) Is there anything in particular your teachers do that you <u>don't</u> find helpful for learning [the FL]?

(f) How does your FL course this year compare with what you did in S3-S4?

much the same
less enjoyable / more enjoyable
less interesting / more interesting
harder / easier
learn less / learn more

PERCEPTION OF VALUE OF FOREIGN LANGUAGE STUDY

S509. (a) Do you think knowing a FL will be useful to you one day?

(b) If so, in what ways?

employment
FE / HE options
travel, mobility
holidays
dealing with tourists

If not, why not?

(c) Did you think that when you first came to Secondary?

If not, what made you change your mind?

ANYTHING ELSE

S510. Is there anything else you would like to say about foreign languages in the school?

Finally, we need to talk to a number of parents about what they think of foreign languages and of the choice of courses that young people make. If any of you think your parents might be interested in taking part, could you please tell me your address and/or phone number?

Many thanks, both for your time and your trouble
All the information you have given us will be treated in the utmost confidence

SCRE
The Scottish Council for Research in Education

Foreign Languages in the Upper Secondary School in Scotland

UNIVERSITY of STIRLING
INNOVATION and EXCELLENCE

Thinking Notes

School

Year group

I will do/ am doing a SG foreign language: No ☐ Yes ☐

If YES, which one?

I would like to do a Higher foreign language: No ☐ Yes ☐

1. Do you know any foreign language apart from English that you didn't learn in school? Please note down what it is and how you come to speak it:
(If you don't, just leave this blank and go on to 2)

2. Did you study a foreign language at primary school? If you did, what was it?

3. Whether you did or didn't do one yourself, please tell us whether or not you think it's a good idea for primary school pupils to do a foreign language, and why:

4. Many schools in Scotland like all pupils to study a foreign language to Standard Grade. Do you think this is a good or a bad idea?

   Why?

5. If you are on a language course this year, what do you think of it?

6. Please note down why you think you will or won't take a foreign language at Higher:

7. In general, do you think it is useful these days for people to speak other languages?

   Why?

8. Do you think it's important for them to get a Standard Grade or a Higher *qualification* in a language?

   Why (why not?)

Thank you!

INTERVIEW SCHEDULE FOR HEAD TEACHERS PRELIMINARY PHASE

NATIONAL AND SCHOOL-SPECIFIC TRENDS

H01. As you will probably know, on a national level the numbers of pupils opting to study foreign languages at higher level have been in decline for some years. How far would you say that trend is reflected in this school?

*

H02. How do you feel about this? (Why do you say this?) *

H03. [If the trend of decline was reflected]:
Has anything been tried to reverse the trend? If so, what? Was there any success?

[If the trend of decline was not reflected]:
Why do you think it is that the school has managed to increase/maintain its foreign language uptake at Higher level? *

PERCEPTION OF REASONS FOR PUPIL CHOICES

H04. In your opinion, why do pupils CHOOSE NOT to study foreign languages at Higher level? (What do they do instead?)

enthusiasm waned in earlier years
dislike of composite classes
dissatisfaction with course materials and courses
dislike of teaching methods experienced at SG
belief of discontinuity between SG and HG
no interest in foreign cultures
timetable clashes
restricted choice of languages
conflicting university entry requirements
foreign language success difficult
languages time consuming *

H05. Why do you think pupils CHOOSE to study foreign languages at Higher level?

university requirement
overall school course balance
membership of the EU
improved career/employment opportunities
mobility within Europe
interest in language generally
interest in going abroad
possibility of direct communication with foreigners
increased status when abroad
enjoyment *

PERCEPTION OF VALUE OF FOREIGN LANGUAGE STUDY

HT06. How important do you, personally, think it is that pupils should study foreign languages? (Why do you think this? Is it true for all pupils, or some pupils?) *

SCHOOL POLICY ON FOREIGN LANGUAGE STUDY

HT07. What is the school policy in foreign language study for S1/S2; S3/4; S5/6? (What opportunities are there at each of these stages for pupils wanting to take modern foreign languages? What languages are offered? What constraints are there, and why are they necessary?) *Ask for copies of policies*

S1/2:

S3/4:

S5/6: *

HT08. To what extent (and in what way) has your school policy on modern foreign languages been shaped by external influences?

a) parent views? b) employer views?

c) local authority guidelines? d) national policies? *

H09. To what extent does the school try to ensure that language learning begun in primary schools is continued here? (Is it continued? If so, how is this managed? If not, why not?) *

H10. In what way does foreign language learning and teaching in the school feature in your School Development Plan: (what priority does it have) *

FOREIGN LANGUAGES IN THE FUTURE

HT11. Do you think the introduction of Higher Still is likely to change school policy and practice in foreign language provision? (In what way?)

broader/ narrower range of languages offered
collaboration with other schools in language provision
increased use of new technology in language provision
increase in uptake of languages modules
changes in the numbers of pupils taking up foreign languages in S5
more composite classes
changes in language staff complement *

HT12. How far do you see it as desirable that the school should
(a) broaden the range of modern foreign languages offered at SG and Higher level?

(b) attract more young people into modern foreign languages at Higher level? *

HT13. What would be needed to make either of these things happen? *

HT14.(a) Would you like to see any changes in the way that modern foreign languages are **offered** in the school? What changes?
Why would you like to see them?

(b) Would you like to see any changes in the way that modern foreign languages are **taught** in the school? What changes?
Why would you like to see them? *

HT15. What would be needed to make either of these things happen? *

ANYTHING ELSE

HT16. Is there anything else you would like to add about modern foreign language provision or uptake at Higher level in the school? *

Many thanks, both for your time and your trouble
All the information you have given us will be treated in the utmost confidence

INTERVIEW SCHEDULE FOR GUIDANCE TEACHERS PRELIMINARY PHASE

UPTAKE OF MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

GT01.

(a) What would you say has been the trend of uptake of Foreign Languages at Higher level in this school over the past five years?

static
uptake declining
uptake increasing

(b) Can you suggest reasons for this?

(c) How do you feel about this pattern of uptake? *

PERCEPTION OF REASONS FOR PUPIL CHOICES

GT02.

Why, do you think, do pupils choose NOT to study a FL at Higher level? (What do they study instead?)

enthusiasm lost by S4
dislike of composite classes
dissatisfaction with course materials and courses
dislike of teaching methods experienced at SG
perception of discontinuity between SG and HG
no interest in foreign cultures
timetable clashes
restricted choice of languages
conflicting university entry requirements
foreign language difficult
languages time consuming *

GT03.

Why, do you think, do pupils CHOOSE to study foreign languages?

university requirement
overall school course balance
membership of the EU
improved career /employment opportunities
mobility within Europe
interest in language generally
interest in going abroad
possibility of direct communication with foreigners
increased status when abroad
enjoyment *

SCHOOL POLICY ON FOREIGN LANGUAGE STUDY

GT04.

With respect to modern foreign languages, are guidance staff encouraged by school policies to advise pupils in any particular way at course choice time? (In what directions?) *

GUIDANCE GIVEN

GT05.

a) Are there circumstances in which you would advise a young person to include a second foreign language at SG in their course choice for S3 and S4? (What circumstances?)

b) When would you advise against? *

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

GT06.

Are there any circumstances in which would you be likely to advise a young person to study a foreign language module instead of a Standard Grade foreign language? (What circumstances?) *

GT07.

a) Are there circumstances in which you would advise a young person to include a foreign language in their course choice for S5 and beyond? (What circumstances?)

b) When would you advise against? *

GT08.

Would you ever suggest to a pupil that she or he should study a module instead of a Higher foreign language? (What circumstances?) *

GT09.

a) Are there any basic subject combinations or 'packages' of subjects for study at higher level that young people frequently choose? (Describe the combinations)

b) Why do pupils choose them? (Does the school encourage them to choose these combinations) *

GT10.

The demands of the working world and the world of higher education are changing rapidly these days - and once Higher Still is in place there will be many routes into both.

a) To what extent does your remit include advising young people about the variety of pathways open to them, to both work and further and higher education?

b) How confident do you feel about doing this? (Reasons)

c) What would help you in this aspect of your work? *

PERCEPTION OF VALUE OF FOREIGN LANGUAGE STUDY

GT11.

How useful do you feel it is for pupils that all are now expected to study a foreign language at SG? (Why is it useful/ not useful?) *

GT12.

a) Do you have any views on the national, i.e. Scotland's, need for young people who are proficient in modern languages? (What are these views)

b) On a more personal level, how important do you think it is that pupils should study foreign languages? (Why do you think this? Is it true for all pupils, or some pupils?) *

GT13.

Are there any strategies that you feel schools could adopt to improve the uptake of modern foreign languages in schools at Higher level?

GT14.

Are there any other comments you would like to make about the uptake of foreign languages in the school, and the role played by guidance staff in this? *

Many thanks, both for your time and your trouble
All the information you have given us will be treated in the utmost confidence

INTERVIEW SCHEDULE FOR TIMETABLERS PRELIMINARY PHASE

TEACHING BACKGROUND (SUBJECT): _____

PRESENTLY TEACHING? YES NO

UPTAKE OF MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

T01.

(a) What would you say has been the trend of uptake of Foreign Languages at Higher level in this school over the past five years?

static
uptake declining
uptake increasing

(b) Can you suggest reasons for this?

(c) How do you feel about this pattern of uptake? *

PERCEPTION OF REASONS FOR PUPIL CHOICES

T02. Why, do you think, do pupils choose NOT to study a FL at Higher level? (What do they study instead?)

enthusiasm lost by S4
dislike of composite classes
dissatisfaction with course materials and courses
dislike of teaching methods experienced at SG
perception of discontinuity between SG and HG
no interest in foreign cultures
timetable clashes
restricted choice of languages
conflicting university entry requirements
foreign language difficult
languages time consuming

T03. Why, do you think, do pupils CHOOSE to study foreign languages?

university requirement
overall school course balance
membership of the EU
improved career / employment opportunities
mobility within Europe
interest in language generally
interest in going abroad
possibility of direct communication with foreigners
increased status when abroad
enjoyment

PERCEPTION OF VALUE OF FOREIGN LANGUAGE STUDY

T04. How useful do you feel it is for pupils that all are now expected to study a foreign language at SG? (Why is it useful/ not useful?) *

T05.

a) Do you have any views on the national, i.e. Scotland's, need for young people who are proficient in modern languages? (What are these views)

b) On a more personal level, how important do you think it is that pupils should study foreign languages? (Why do you think this? Is it true for all pupils, or some pupils?) *

PRESENT PROVISION AND TIMETABLING OF FOREIGN LANGUAGE STUDY

T06. Can you describe what options the school offers for foreign language study in S1/S2; S3/4; S5/6?
(What opportunities are there at each of these stages for pupils wanting to take modern foreign languages? What languages are offered? What constraints are there, and why are they necessary?)

S1/2:

S3/4:

S5/6:

Note: If questions T07 and T08 have already been answered in T06, proceed to T09 which 'mops up' on the theme of present constraints.

T07. Are there any constraints on you, as timetabler, to ensure continuity in S1 with the language learning begun in your associated primaries?

T08. What effect has the implementation of 'Languages For All' had on the timetabling of secondary courses?

T09. Do any other constraints operate on the provision of FLs in the school?

T10. Are you satified with the present range of FL provision being offered in the school?

Why? Why not?

FUTURE PROVISION AND TIMETABLING OF FOREIGN LANGUAGE STUDY

T11. (a) What issues does the introduction of Higher Still raise for you as timetabler?

(b) What are the implications of these for FL provision in the school?

T12. How far do you see it as desirable that the school should
(a) broaden the range of modern foreign languages offered at SG and Higher level?

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(b) attract more young people into modern foreign languages at Higher level?

T13. What would be needed to make either of these things happen? *

ANYTHING ELSE

T14. Is there anything else you would like to add about modern foreign language provision or uptake at Higher level in the school?

*

Many thanks, both for your time and your trouble
All the information you have given us will be treated in the utmost confidence.

Appendix B

B-1: The S4 student questionnaire with responses added

B-2: The S5 student questionnaire with responses added

B-3: The principal teachers' questionnaire with responses added

B-4: Headteachers' questionnaire with responses added

B-5: Parents' interview schedule with responses added

B-6: Business interview schedule with responses added

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The Scottish Council for Research in Education

FOREIGN LANGUAGES IN THE UPPER SECONDARY SCHOOL

Questionnaire for Students in S4 of Scottish Secondary Schools

Dear S4 Pupils

Thank you for taking part in our survey of secondary students' views on learning foreign languages. It is part of a national research project, commissioned by the Scottish Office Education and Industry Department, to find out why there has been a decline in the numbers of students taking a modern foreign language at Higher. The study is being carried out by a team of researchers from the Scottish Council for Research in Education and the University of Stirling Department of Education.

This questionnaire is a very important part of this research. It is not a test. Its aim is to help the research team understand students' views better. Please answer the questions as fully and as honestly as you can. All responses will be treated in strict confidence: we are not asking you to give us your name.

When you have completed the questionnaire, please put it in the attached envelope and seal it, and then hand it to the member of staff who is supervising you.

Your responses will be invaluable in helping the research team with its work.

Thank you very much for your co-operation.

Joanna McPake

Joanna McPake
Project Co-Director

The Scottish Council for Research in Education
15 St John Street, EDINBURGH EH8 8JR

Number of pupils in sample per school ranges from 1 to 68
Total number in S4 sample = 1657

123

Are you male or female? **(n=1637)**

male	female
41%	58%

123

How old are you? **(n=1633)**

Age	
14	1%
15	91%
16	7%

APPENDIX B-1

SECTION A: YOUR VIEWS ABOUT LANGUAGES

Q1. Do you enjoy learning other languages? Other people your age made these comments. Do you agree with them?
Learning languages ...

		Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree	(n)
a)	... is fun	3%	24%	46%	20%	7%	(1650)
b)	... helps me to appreciate different ways of life and points of view	5%	42%	34%	16%	3%	(1649)
c)	... allows me to make contact with people I might not otherwise meet	13%	40%	25%	19%	4%	(1638)
d)	... is of little use to me at present	10%	29%	18%	34%	9%	(1638)
e)	... will allow me to consider studying abroad in the future	25%	45%	16%	10%	4%	(1642)
f)	... helps me to understand my own first language	4%	22%	29%	34%	11%	(1640)
g)	... helps me to have a more international outlook	8%	45%	31%	13%	3%	(1647)
h)	... has encouraged me to think about visiting other countries	22%	38%	22%	15%	3%	(1649)
i)	... is intellectually stimulating	7%	23%	38%	21%	12%	(1646)
j)	... will be of no use to me in my future career	9%	14%	27%	31%	19%	(1644)
k)	... will help me find work in the Europe of the future	13%	39%	34%	10%	3%	(1642)
l)	... is pointless, as most foreigners speak English	5%	11%	18%	41%	26%	(1641)
m)	... will help me take up work experience opportunities abroad in the course of my studies	13%	43%	30%	11%	3%	(1651)

Q2. Is it important for Scots to be able to speak other languages, apart from English? Do you agree with these comments?

		Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree	(n)
a)	Learning a modern language should be compulsory for all students from P6 to S4	21%	38%	16%	16%	9%	(1653)
b)	Learning a modern language should be compulsory for all students in S5	3%	7%	21%	42%	27%	(1650)
c)	Scottish employers see languages as a valuable skill for employees	12%	41%	34%	11%	2%	(1644)
d)	It's mainly an English-speaking world: we don't need to learn other languages	3%	7%	18%	47%	25%	(1647)
e)	It is important for Scots to learn other languages so as to participate fully in the European Union	12%	46%	31%	9%	2%	(1650)
f)	Scottish businesses would do better if more Scots could speak other languages as well as English	17%	41%	29%	11%	3%	(1655)

SECTION B: LANGUAGES AT SCHOOL

In this section we want to find out about the language(s) you are studying at school now.

Q3. How many modern languages (not counting English) are you studying now? (n=1656)

1 modern language	86%	2 modern languages	14%	3 modern languages	0

Q4. Which language(s) are you studying now?	**Q5. When did you start to study each language at school?**	**Q7.* Roughly how much time per week do you spend on homework?**	**Q8. Roughly how many times per term do you have a lesson with the language assistant(s)?**
Language 1			
French 68%	P1-5 2%	less than half an hour 26%	more than once a week 4%
German 29%	P6 9%	half an hour - 1 hour 42%	once a week 20%
Italian 1%	P7 16%	1-2 hours 25%	once a fortnight 15%
Spanish 2%	S1 70%	more than 2 hours 6%	once a month or less 22%
Gaelic 0.2%	S2 2%		none 38%
(n=1654)	S3 1% (n=1634)	(n=1650)	(n=1590)
Language 2			
French 21%	P1-7 7%	less than half an hour 16%	more than once a week 5%
German 47%	S1 13%	half an hour - 1 hour 35%	once a week 25%
Italian 10%	S2 26%	1-2 hours 40%	once a fortnight 13%
Spanish 22%	S3 52%	more than 2 hours 9%	once a month or less 11%
Gaelic 0.4%	S4 1%		none 45%
(n=239)	(n=233)	(n=243)	(n=232)

*Data relating to Q6. "Roughly how much time per week do you spend on each language in school?" is not included as student estimates were unreliable. Information about the amount of time spent can be found in the answers to questions 32 and 33 of the Principal Teachers' questionnaire.

Q9. Are you an enthusiastic language learner? Say whether you agree or not with these statements about yourself as a language learner.

	Language 1						Language 2					
	strongly agree	agree	neutral	disagree	strongly disagree	(n)	strongly agree	agree	neutral	disagree	strongly disagree	(n)
a) I enjoy the challenge of trying to communicate in this language	12%	40%	27%	16%	6%	(1650)	26%	48%	17%	7%	2%	(240)
b) I haven't got much talent for learning this language	5%	17%	25%	41%	12%	(1650)	2%	8%	21%	47%	21%	(241)
c) I work hard at learning this language	11%	41%	31%	14%	3%	(1646)	29%	45%	19%	5%	2%	(240)
d) I feel confident when asked to speak this language in class	6%	23%	29%	31%	11%	(1651)	16%	32%	25%	23%	3%	(241)
e) When trying to communicate in this language, I'm prepared to make mistakes	13%	62%	20%	5%	1%	(1649)	18%	57%	19%	6%	1%	(241)
f) I enjoy listening to native speakers talking in this language	9%	27%	31%	24%	9%	(1649)	20%	40%	25%	13%	3%	(241)
g) I practise this language when I'm on my own	5%	24%	23%	31%	18%	(1645)	8%	34%	27%	24%	7%	(238)
h) Listening to the teacher speak this language makes me feel anxious	4%	16%	27%	40%	13%	(1646)	5%	14%	25%	39%	18%	(238)
i) I sometimes read books, magazines or newspapers in this language in my spare time	1%	6%	9%	41%	43%	(1649)	2%	13%	12%	42%	31%	(241)
j) I sometimes watch films, videos or TV programmes in this language in my spare time	2%	8%	12%	38.5%	39%	(1650)	4%	11%	18%	40%	28%	(240)
k) I sometimes read and write letters, faxes or e-mail messages in this language in my spare time	2%	11%	10%	37%	40%	(1650)	5%	14%	15%	38%	29%	(241)

Now, think back over the years you have been studying modern languages and tell us about your experiences

Q10. Did you study any modern languages at primary school? (n=1620)

Yes 40% No 60%

Q11. Did you enjoy learning a language in primary school? Other people your age made these comments about their experiences. Do you agree with them?

	Please write the name of the language you studied in primary school here: French: 68% Gaelic: 1% German: 20% Urdu: 0.2% Italian: 7% Other: 0.7% Spanish: 3% 2 languages: 0.8% (n=613)					
	strongly agree	agree	neutral	disagree	strongly disagree	(n)
a) Learning this language in primary school was fun	28%	51%	10%	7%	4%	(662)
b) I learnt a lot	11%	34%	26%	22%	7%	(662)
c) It helped me with languages when I started secondary school	27%	42%	12%	10%	9%	(663)
d) We spent too much time on it	1%	5%	18%	55%	22%	(661)
e) It was confusing	5%	14%	25%	42%	14%	(662)

Q12. Did you enjoy learning a language (or languages) in S1 and S2? Here are some more comments from other people your age. What do you think?

	Language 1						Language 2					
	strongly agree	agree	neutral	disagree	strongly disagree	(n)	strongly agree	agree	neutral	disagree	strongly disagree	(n)
a) I learnt a lot	22%	54%	16%	6%	2%	(1570)	20%	40%	19%	15%	6%	(260)
b) It was boring	7%	19%	27%	37%	10%	(1572)	10%	19%	20%	35%	17%	(260)
c) It was good preparation for Standard Grade	23%	51%	16%	8%	2%	(1570)	17%	32%	18%	20%	13%	(247)
d) The teaching methods didn't suit me	4%	11%	29%	45%	11%	(1569)	7%	18%	23%	38%	14%	(260)
e) The course book/ materials were interesting	5%	29%	35%	24%	8%	(1570)	7%	27%	33%	24%	9%	(260)
f) The pace was too slow	4%	12%	31%	47%	7%	(1569)	7%	14%	29%	42%	9%	(260)
g) The course book/ materials were well-organised for study and revision	5%	33%	36%	20%	5%	(1567)	9%	30%	35%	29%	5%	(260)
h) There was too much grammar	10%	21%	32%	30%	7%	(1567)	9%	17%	36%	29%	10%	(260)

Q13. Were you able to choose the language(s) you wanted to study in S3 and S4? (n=1651)

Yes 71% No 29%

Please say why you were not able to choose the language(s) you wanted (n = 480)

'school rules' (98%)
preferred language class full (1%)
other reasons (1%)

Q14. Who gave you advice about subject choices for S3 and S4? (n=1610)

Subject teachers	66%	Guidance teachers	63%
Careers teachers	70%	Family	73%

(n=156)

Other: Friends 71% Senior school staff 10%
Own choice 14% Professionals 3% Publications 2%

Q15. When you were making choices for S3 and S4 did you feel that you were given the information you needed about modern languages by the people who advised you? (n=1601)

Yes 59% No 41% 3%

Please say what you found particularly helpful (n=721)

information about the course	(55%)*
information from the school	(25%)
information about careers with languages	(11%)
the view that languages are beneficial	(8%)
advice from family and friends	(2%)
supportive attitude from school	(1%)
advice from those who had already taken the course	(1%)
information about languages in education	(1%)

Please say what information you would have liked (n=534)

information about the course	(76%)
information from the school	(12%)
information about careers with languages	(12%)
information about languages in education	(2%)

*Please note that in this table percentages do not add up to 100, as students could give more than one explanation.

Q16. What Standard Grades in modern languages will you be sitting this summer and what level?

	Credit and Writing	Credit No Writing	General	Foundation
Language 1 (n=1654)	84%	12%	5%	0.1%
Language 2 (n=228)	90%	4%	6%	0.4%

Q17. Have you enjoyed learning a language (or languages) in S3 and S4? Do you agree with these comments?

		Language 1						Language 2					
		strongly agree	agree	neutral	disagree	strongly disagree	(n)	strongly agree	agree	neutral	disagree	strongly disagree	(n)
a)	The teaching methods suit me	8%	39%	33%	15%	5%	(1654)	16%	51%	21%	10%	3%	(237)
b)	The course book/ materials are boring	13%	32%	29%	23%	3%	(1652)	6%	27%	27%	32%	8%	(237)
c)	The pace is about right	7%	53%	22%	15%	3%	(1650)	10%	58%	15%	14%	3%	(235)
d)	There is too little grammar	2%	8%	24%	47%	20%	(1654)	3%	10%	23%	44%	21%	(237)
e)	The course book/ materials are well organised for study and revision	6%	33%	34%	21%	6%	(1653)	9%	40%	29%	18%	4%	(237)
f)	Standard Grade assessments are about right for what I have learnt	8%	53%	24%	12%	2%	(1654)	14%	53%	21%	8.5%	3%	(234)
g)	I have worked very hard at this language over the last two years	14%	38%	27%	16%	5%	(1651)	32%	42%	16%	7%	2%	(235)
h)	There is too much emphasis on speaking in S3 and S4	7%	18%	27%	38%	10%	(1649)	4%	13%	24%	45%	14%	(233)
i)	Standard Grade does not cover what is needed for real communication	10%	21%	27%	36%	6%	(1654)	5%	15%	22%	49%	10%	(233)
j)	I feel confident about communicating with speakers of the language	4%	19%	30%	32%	14%	(1653)	11%	23%	35%	26%	5%	(235)

Q18. What do you intend to do after this school year? (n=1649)

Stay on to S5	96%
Leave and get a job	1%
Go to a Further Education College	2%
Something else	0.2%

Q19. Will you continue to study languages in S5? (n=1582)

Yes 36% No 64%

Q20. What are your reasons for deciding whether or not to take modern languages in S5 or S6? (n = 1548)

Positive reasons: total 37%		Negative reasons: total 63%	
Positive	*(n = 575)*	*Negative*	*(n = 973)*
		decided to take other subjects	(28%)*
useful for employment	(48%)	not useful for employment	(25%)
enjoy languages	(40%)	dislike languages	(25%)
		languages are difficult	(24%)
		languages are boring	(16%)
generally useful in the future	(18%)	not generally useful in the future	(9%)
		timetable clashes	(8%)
useful for education	(16%)	not useful for education	(3%)
good at languages at SG	(9%)	not good at languages at SG	(7%)
keen to communicate with foreigners	(9%)	heavy workload	(2%)
languages are beneficial	(5%)		
mfl Highers are highly regarded	(5%)	mfl Highers are not highly regarded	(1%)
intend to travel	(4%)		
like teacher / style of teaching	(1%)	dislike teacher / style of teaching	(5%)
interested in learning about other cultures	(1%)		
advised to take mfl	(1%)	advised not to take mfl	(1%)
		preferred language not available	(1%)
useful in the EU of the future	(1%)		
enhances confidence	(0.5%)	creates insecurity	(2%)

*Please note that in this table percentages do not add up to 100, as students could give more than one explanation.

Q21. Who gave you advice about subject choices for S5? (n=1561)

Subject teachers	62%	Guidance teachers	57%
Careers teachers	38%	Family	70%

n = 152
Other: 59% (friends) 7% (senior school staff) 17% (own choice) 6.5% (publications) 11% (careers advice)

Q22. Did you feel that when you were making choices for S5 that you were given the information you needed about modern languages by the people who advised you? (n=1421)

Yes 63%

Please say what you found particularly helpful (n=689)

information about the course	(40%)*
information from the school	(35%)
school publications	(13%)
information about careers with mfls	(10%)
the view that languages are beneficial	(1%)
information about mfls in education	(3%)
advice from family and friends	(1%)
advice from those who had already taken the course	(1%)

No 37%

Please say what information you would have liked (n=379)

information about the course	(77%)
information from the school	(11%)
information about careers with mfls	(7%)
the view that languages are beneficial	(7%)
information about mfls in education	(2%)

*Please note that in this table percentages do not add up to 100, as students could give more than one explanation.

Q23. Do you plan to take any of these subjects in S5 and S6? If you are not certain yet, say what you think you will do.
(n=1657)

				Higher in S5	Higher in S6	Modules in S5	Modules in S6
28%*	a)	French	(n=470)	68%	18%	7%	7%
16%	b)	German	(n=263)	64%	19%	8%	9%
94%	c)	English	(n=1553)	85%	8%	7%	0
85%	d)	Maths	(n=1404)	74%	9%	16%	1%
43.5%	e)	Biology	(n=720)	61%	27%	8.5%	2.5%
39.5%	f)	Chemistry	(n=655)	77%	16%	4%	2%
37%	g)	Physics	(n=613)	83%	11%	4%	2%
33%	h)	History	(n=373)	65%	26%	6%	3%
24%	i)	Geography	(n=400)	65%	24%	8%	3.5%
	j)	*Other:*					

	%		%
IT	27	art and design	21
modern studies	21	PE	20
accounting and finance	14	music	15
Spanish	6	Italian	3
Russian	1	Latin	1
Gaelic	0.4	Gailidgh	0.1

42 other subjects mentioned

*Please note that in this table percentages do not add up to 100, as students could be taking more than one of these subjects.

Q24. Do you know what career would like to follow yet? (n=1650)

Yes 68% *Please go to Question 25* No 32% *Please go to Question 26*

Q25. What career do you want to follow?

Top 5 career areas mentioned

Health Teaching Design Sciences Armed/emergency forces

SECTION C: IN YOUR OWN WORDS

Please tell us your views on language learning at school frankly and in your own words

Q26 What have you enjoyed about modern languages at school? (n = 1602)	%	Q27 What have you not enjoyed about modern languages at school? (n = 1528)	%
nothing	9*	everything	4*
not much	5	most things	2
opportunities to use the language			
speaking the language	15	have not learnt enough to speak properly	1
communicating with foreigners	12		
understanding the language	4		
exchange / trip abroad/ penpal	4		
using what has been learnt abroad	4		
the pleasure of speaking another language			
speaking language with friends	2		
speaking language to teacher	1		
cultural understanding			
learning about different countries, cultures	10	not learning the language used today	1
learning how people live in another country	6		
learning how different people communicate	1		
learning how people speak in different countries	1		
cultural value			
broadens horizons	1		
feeling more 'educated'	1		
learning about languages			
learning how to communicate in a different language	2		
particular aspects of language use			
speaking and conversation	6	speaking	5
learning to speak / pronounce the language	3	speaking in front of the class	2
		speaking/ speaking tests are difficult	1
learning the structure of language	1	grammar	15
		grammar is confusing and difficult	4
		too much grammar	3
		grammar is boring	2
		learning verbs	8
		learning tenses	4
		verbs/ tenses are difficult	1
writing	3	writing	7
		amount of writing	1
		writing tests are difficult	1

*Please note that in these tables percentages do not add up to 100, as students could give more than one explanation in each case.

reading	2	reading	2
vocabulary	2	learning vocabulary	7
learning useful phrases	1	lack of time to learn vocabulary	1
		vocabulary is boring	1
		learning vocabulary is difficult	1
listening to the language/ listening tests	1	listening tests are difficult	5
speaking tests	1	speaking tests	8
		number of speaking tests	1
		self consciousness during speaking tests	1
	particular aspects of the course		
the course has been fun	5	course has been boring	6
		course is irrelevant	1
		course is repetitive	1
		course is badly structured	1
activities were enjoyable	2		
the course has been beneficial	1		
topics were interesting	1	topics were boring	1
		homework	2
		amount of homework	3
		exams and tests	3
		revising for tests and exams	1
	a sense of progression		
gaining confidence	1		
getting better at languages	1	not doing well	1
	a sense of achievement		
learning a new language	11		
learning the language	3		
	enjoyment / interest		
learning languages is interesting	5	learning languages is boring	7
languages are a different kind of subject	1		
	responding to the challenge		
learning languages is challenging	2	languages are difficult	7
		languages are confusing	1
		amount of learning involved too great	3
		work is too hard	3
		too much work is needed for SG	1
		too much information to absorb	1
		pace is too rushed	1
	practical value		
a useful skill	3		
languages allow you to travel	1		

	past enjoyment		
liked languages in S1	3		
liked languages in S2	3		
enjoyed the course up to SG	1	SG is boring	1
	easiness		
not much pressure	1	pace is too slow	1
	classroom experiences		
teacher is good	3	teacher is not good	1
		dislike teacher	3
		teacher is intimidating	1
		teacher is not motivated	1
teaching methods are good	2	dislike teaching methods	4
		teaching methods are repetitive	1
		teaching methods are dull	1
		teaching methods are confused	2
		teaching structure (???)	1
foreign language assistants	2		
atmosphere, friends	1	class is too noisy	1
	materials		
		materials are boring	1
		materials are irrelevant	1
		dislike textbooks	1
	choice		
		lack of choice of language	1

152

152A

There has been a significant drop in the numbers of students in Scotland taking Highers in modern languages at school

Q23 Why do you think this is? (n = 1593) %		Q24 What would you do to increase numbers? (n = 1443)	
an unattractive subject			
languages are boring	20*	make it more interesting	20*
languages are not enjoyable	7	make it more fun	16
		make it more enjoyable	6
		make it more exciting	3
languages do not appeal to many people	4	make it more appealing	2
an irrelevant subject			
many people believe languages are unnecessary for future	8	tell students languages will be useful in the future	1
many people speak English so mfls unnecessary	7	tell students not everyone speaks English	1
languages are a waste of time	2		
languages are irrelevant to students' daily lives	1	put more emphasis on real communication	2
		use more foreign language assistants	2
		use more native speaker teachers	1
		have more exchanges/ trips abroad	10
		have more penfriend schemes	1
		use the internet to link with other countries	1
languages will not be useful in later life	1	make it more useful	3
many people don't intend to leave the UK	1		
not useful for future careers / study			
languages are not useful for careers	9	make students more aware of the opportunities for linguists	2
		interest students in careers with languages	1
Higher languages are irrelevant to many careers	3		
languages are not an important university entrance requirement	2	tell students languages are important for for university	3
many people do not want careers with languages	1	tell students languages will help them get work abroad	1
languages do not help to get jobs in Scotland	1	more employers/ universities should ask for Higher languages	1
other subjects are more important for getting a job	1		
other subjects required for chosen careers	1		

*Please note that in these tables percentages do not add up to 100, as students could give more than one explanation in each case.

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153A[14]

demands of the subject			
languages are difficult	22	make it easier	11
		leave more time for revision	1
grammar is difficult	1	spend less time on grammar	3
learning verbs/ tenses is difficult	1	spend less time on verbs	1
		teach more grammar	1
		teach grammar and verbs in a different way	1
speaking is difficult	1	have more speaking	3
		have less speaking	1
writing is difficult	1	have less writing	2
too much writing	1		
learning vocabulary is difficult	1		
		increase student confidence	1
		increase the length of courses	2
approach to teaching languages			
teaching methods and materials are boring	3	change teaching methods	6
		use modern films, videos and IT	2
		teach more about country and culture	1
		update materials	1
		make books more relevant to young people	1
		make books more interesting	1
teaching methods are poor or dated	2	teach in a more enjoyable way	4
		update teaching methods	1
teachers are not good	1	employ better teachers	5
teachers are unenthusiastic	1		
students dislike language teachers	1		
		spend more time on certain topics	1
problems with Standard Grade			
SG course is boring	7	change SG course	1
		broaden the range of SG topics	1
		teach SG more quickly	1
		have fewer speaking tests	1
		have fewer tests	1
SG course is difficult	3		
SG is not enjoyable	2		
SG is not enough	1		
bad marks at SG put students off	1		
problems with Higher			
Higher languages are difficult	5	make Higher easier/ more accessible	2
there is too big a gap between SG and Higher	2		
you need to work hard to do well in Higher mfls	2		
teachers make Higher languages sound difficult	1		

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154A

better information / publicity required			
people think they don't need languages	2		
there is not enough emphasis on the importance of languages	1	make students understand the importance	2
lack of information about languages	1	provide more information about languages	2
not enough encouragement to take languages	1	promote the subject more	4
students need to be told about the benefits	1	make students understand the benefits	4
better organisation required			
Higher mfls clash with other subjects	2		
lack of choice			
there is a lack of choice of languages	2	increase choice of languages	4
people have to take languages they don't like	1	allow pupils to choose the language they want	3
		increase range of subject choices in S5/6	1
other subjects are more important / useful			
other subjects are more important	4		
other subjects are more interesting	2		
other subjects are more relevant	2		
other subjects are easier	1		
other subjects get you further	1		
place of languages in the curriculum			
we start learning languages too late	1	start teaching languages earlier	5
		make languages compulsory in S5	4
classroom conditions			
		have smaller classes	1

155 A

155

130

No of pupils in sample per school ranges from 1 to 35
Total number in S5: 1323

The Scottish Council for Research in Education

FOREIGN LANGUAGES IN THE UPPER SECONDARY SCHOOL

Questionnaire for Students in S5 of Scottish Secondary Schools

Dear S5 Pupil

Thank you for taking part in our survey of secondary students' views on learning foreign languages. It is part of a national research project, commissioned by the Scottish Office Education and Industry Department, to find out why there has been a decline in the numbers of students taking a modern foreign language at Higher. The study is being carried out by a team of researchers from the Scottish Council for Research in Education and the University of Stirling Department of Education.

This questionnaire is a very important part of this research. It is not a test. Its aim is to help the research team understand students' views better. Please answer the questions as fully and as honestly as you can. All responses will be treated in strict confidence: we are not asking you to give us your name.

When you have completed the questionnaire, please put it in the attached envelope and seal it, and then hand it to the member of staff who is supervising you.

Your responses will be invaluable in helping the research team with its work.

Thank you very much for your co-operation.

Joanna McPake

Joanna McPake
Project Co-Director

The Scottish Council for Research in Education
15 St John Street, EDINBURGH EH8 8JR

BEFORE WE START, PLEASE TELL US A LITTLE ABOUT YOURSELF

Are you male or female?
Please tick the appropriate box

(n = 1314)

36% male 64% female

How old are you?
Please write your age in this space: (n=1313)

15 = 2%
16 = 91%
17 = 3%

156

15

APPENDIX B-2

SECTION A: YOUR VIEWS ABOUT LANGUAGES

Q1. Do you enjoy learning other languages? Other people your age made these comments. Do you agree with them?

Please circle the number which most closely represents your view in each case.

Learning languages ...

		Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree	(n)
a)	... can be fun	8%	49%	32%	9%	2%	(1323)
b)	... can help me to appreciate different ways of life and points of view	11%	54%	25%	8%	2%	(1323)
c)	... can allow me to make contact with people I might not otherwise meet	25%	49%	16%	8%	2%	(1318)
d)	... is of little use to me at present	11%	22%	23%	33%	8%	(1316)
e)	... could allow me to consider studying abroad in the future	33%	44%	12%	7%	3%	(1319)
f)	... has helped me to understand my own first language	7%	21%	29%	35%	9%	(1315)
g)	... has helped me to have a more international outlook	8%	38%	35%	16%	3%	(1318)
h)	... has encouraged me to think about visiting other countries	26%	37%	21%	13%	3%	(1318)
i)	... can be intellectually stimulating	12%	39%	33%	12%	5%	(1318)
j)	... will be of no use to me in my future career	7%	12%	26%	33%	22%	(1319)
k)	... will help me find work in the Europe of the future	16%	38%	33%	10%	2%	(1316)
l)	... is pointless, as most foreigners speak English	3%	6%	16%	41%	34%	(1313)
m)	... could help me take up work experience opportunities abroad in the course of my studies	24%	46%	22%	7%	1%	(1322)

Q2. Is it important for Scots to be able to speak other languages, apart from English? Do you agree with these comments?

Please circle the number which most closely represent your view.

		Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree	(n)
a)	Learning a modern language should be compulsory for all students from P6 to S4	28%	40%	15%	13%	5%	(1321)
b)	Learning a modern language should be compulsory for all students in S5	2%	7%	20%	46%	25%	(1319)
c)	Scottish employers see languages as a valuable skill for employees	11%	45%	32%	12%	1%	(1317)
d)	It's mainly an English-speaking world: we don't need to learn other languages	2%	5%	13%	47%	33%	1318)
e)	It is important for Scots to learn other languages so as to participate fully in the European Union	14%	46%	29%	10%	2%	(1320)
f)	Scottish businesses would do better if more Scots could speak other languages as well as English	19%	43%	28%	9%	1%	(1321)

SECTION B: CHOICES FOR S5

Q3. What subjects are you taking this year?

(n)			Higher	Modules
(380)	a)	French	85%	15%
(176)	b)	German	90%	10%
(1299)	c)	English	87%	13%
(1092)	d)	Maths	68%	32%
(911)	e)	Biology	86%	14%
(453)	f)	Chemistry	92%	8%
(429)	g)	Physics	91%	9%
(206)	h)	History	90%	10%
(246)	i)	Geography	89%	11%

Please tick the appropriate boxes.

	Higher	Modules
k) Other *Please write in the spaces below*		
.....	☐1	☐2
.....	☐1	☐2
.....	☐1	☐2
.....	☐1	☐2
.....	☐1	☐2
.....	☐1	☐2
.....	☐1	☐2
.....	☐1	☐2
.....	☐1	☐2

Q4. Who gave you advice about subject choices for S5? (n=1323)

Subject teachers	59%	Guidance teachers	34%
Careers teachers	52%	Family	68%

Other *Please say who* friends - 49%; own choice - 27%; university staff/publications - 12% (n=160)

Q5. When you were making choices for S5, did you feel that you were given the information you needed about modern languages by the people who advised you? (n=1279)

Yes 55%
Please say what you found particularly helpful

(n=549)
- info on course - 55%*
- advice from school staff - 23%
- relevance of languages to employment - 11%

No 46%
Please say what information you would have liked

(n=490)
- info on course - 70%
- relevance of languages to employment - 20%
- general benefits of languages - 15%

*Please note that in these tables percentages do not add up to 100, as students could give more than one explanation.

Q6. What are your reasons for deciding whether or not to take modern languages in S5?

Please explain your reasons briefly in the box below.

(n=1292)

Positive reasons: total 42%

Positive (n=544, the no of pupils who put a positive reason first)

useful for future employment	30%*
enjoy languages	29%
enjoyed / did well at SG	11%
useful for my future in general	10%
useful for future education	10%
for travel	3%
useful in EU of future	1%
took a Module to try another language	1%
languages are a good subject to take at Higher	1%

Negative reasons: total 58%

Negative (n=748, the no of pupils who put a negative reason first)

decided to take other subjects	19%
dislike languages	18%
languages are difficult	15%
not useful for future employment	14%
did not enjoy / do well at SG	8%
not useful for my future in general	7%
timetable problems	7%
not useful for education	4%
languages are boring	2%
languages are a bad subject to take at Higher	2%
negative attitude to teacher / teaching	2%
heavy workload	1%
lack confidence	1%
delay Higher until S6	1%

* Please note that the percentages in this table do not add up to 100 as students could give more than one explanation

Q7. What Standard Grades in modern languages did you sit last summer? What did you achieve? *Please tick the appropriate boxes*

	Please list the language(s) you are taking in the spaces below	Credit and Writing	Credit No Writing	General	Foundation
(n=1313)	Language 1 French 69% Italian 2% German 26% Spanish 4%	74%	14%	12%	—
(n=254)	Language 2 German 43% Spanish 17% French 28% Italian 11%	82%	10%	8%	—
(n=1)	Language 3 German 100%	—	100%	—	—

Q8. What are you hoping to achieve at the end of your modern languages courses this year?

	Please list the language(s) you are taking this year in the spaces below	**Higher** *Please say which grade (e.g. A B C)*	**Modules** *Please say which module you hope to complete*
	Language 1 French 65% Spanish 10% German 23% Italian 2% (n=557)	A = 43% B = 47% C = 10% (n=465)	Module 1 = 25% Module 2 = 10% Module 3 = 57% (n=63)
	Language 2 German 40% French 15% Spanish 32% Italian 14% (n=124)	A = 56% B = 39% C = 5% (n=80)	Module 1 = 25% Module 2 = 28% Module 3 = 17% (n=32)
	Language 3 Spanish 60% Italian 40% (n=5)	—	Module 1 = 80% Module 2 = 20% (n=5)

*Q10: Pupil information was not regarded as reliable.
This data may be found in the PT questionnaires

Please list the language(s) you are taking this year in the spaces below	**Q9. When did you start to study each language at school?** *Please write in the school year in which you started to learn each language in the spaces below (e.g. P6, S1, etc.)*	**Q10. Roughly how much time per week do you spend on each language in school?** *Please write the amount of time per week for each language in the spaces bellow.*	**Q11. Roughly how much time per week do you spend on homework?** *Please tick the box which is closest to the amount of time per week you spend on homework for each language*	**Q12. Roughly how many times per term do you have a lesson with the language assistant(s)?** *Please tick the box which is closest to the number of times per term you have a lesson with the language assistant(s)*
Language 1 French 64% German 24% Spanish 10% Italian 2% (n=556)	P1-5 1% P6 10% P7 9% S1 66% S2 4% S3 5% S5 4% (n=555)	* ..... periods per week ..... minutes per period = ... minutes per week	less than half an hour 10% half an hour - 1 hour 16% 1-2 hours 35% more than 2 hours 38% (n=550)	more than once a week 7% once a week 36% once a fortnight 16% once a month or less 9% none 33% (n=530)
Language 2 French 22% German 34% Spanish 30% Italian 14% (n=136)	P6 2% P7 5% S1 14% S2 26% S3 34% S5 19% (n=133)	..... periods per week ..... minutes per period = ... minutes per week	less than half an hour 20% half an hour - 1 hour 16% 1-2 hours 27% more than 2 hours 38% (n=128)	more than once a week 5% once a week 27% once a fortnight 13% once a month or less 9% none 46% (n=117)
Language 3 Spanish 44% Italian 33% German 22% (n=9)	S3 11% S4 11% S5 8% (n=9)	..... periods per week ..... minutes per period = ... minutes per week	less than half an hour 63% half an hour - 1 hour 13% 1-2 hours 13% more than 2 hours 13% (n=8)	more than once a week 14% once a week – once a fortnight – once a month or less – none 86% (n=7)

APPENDIX B-2

Q13. Are you enjoying your language(s) course(s) this year? These are comments made by other people your age about Highers and modules in modern languages. Do you agree with them?

Please circle the appropriate numbers in each case

If you are only taking Highers or only taking modules, please ignore questions about the course you are not taking.

Please write the name(s) of the language(s) you take in the spaces	Language 1 French 64% Italian 2% German 24% Spanish 10% (n=552)					Language 2 German 40% Italian 14% Spanish 29% French 19% (n=124)					Language 3 Spanish 57% Italian 43% (n=7)					
HIGHERS	strongly agree	agree	neutral	disagree	strongly disagree (n)	strongly agree	agree	neutral	disagree	strongly disagree (n)	strongly agree	agree	neutral	disagree	strongly disagree	(n)
a) Standard Grade is good preparation for Higher	26%	38%	12%	18%	9% (481)	32%	40%	11%	12%	5% (81)	–	–	–	–	–	–
b) The course book/ materials are well organised for study and revision	8%	39%	32%	19%	3% (478)	13%	49%	26%	11%	1% (80)	–	–	–	–	–	–
c) The course makes me confident about being able to communicate with native speakers	10%	44%	29%	16%	2% (480)	18%	48%	24%	9%	1% (82)	–	–	–	–	–	–
d) We should have done more grammar in earlier years to help prepare us for Higher	50%	28%	13%	8%	2% (480)	42%	22%	24%	9%	4% (81)	–	–	–	–	–	–
MODULES																
e) Taking modules has allowed me to start a new language	29%	15%	26%	20%	11% (86)	45%	24%	12%	12%	7% (42)	100%	–	–	–	–	(7)
f) The course makes me feel confident about being able to communicate with native speakers	13%	37%	32%	13%	4% (91)	10%	46%	29%	15%	– (41)	14%	57%	29%	–	–	(7)
g) The course book/ materials are well-organised for study and revision	10%	38%	29%	16%	8% (90)	12%	33%	36%	19%	– (42)	29%	29%	29%	14%	–	(7)
l) There are too many assessments	4%	13%	41%	28%	14% (91)	12%	12%	41%	31%	5% (42)	–	–	–	100%	–	(7)

Q14. Is there anything else you would like to say about either the Higher or the Module course(s) you are taking?

Please give any further comments in the box below.

negative attitude to Higher course	36%
negative attitude to the relationship between SG and Higher	31%
positive attitude to the Higher course	17%
negative attitude to teacher/teaching	11%
positive attitude to Module course	5%
negative attitude to Module course	4%
value of foreign languages	4%

(n=245)

*Please note that the percentages in this table do not add up to 100 as students could give more than one explanation

Q15. Are you an enthusiastic language learner? Say whether you agree or not with these statements about yourself as a language learner.

Please circle the appropriate numbers in each case

Please write the name(s) of the language(s) you take in the spaces	Language 1 French 64% Spanish 10% German 24% Italian 2% (n=556)						Language 2 German 37% Russian 1% Spanish 28% Italian 14% French 20% (n=128)						Language 3 Spanish 63% Italian 38% (n=8)					
	strongly agree	agree	neutral	disagree	strongly disagree	(n)	strongly agree	agree	neutral	disagree	strongly disagree	(n)	strongly agree	agree	neutral	disagree	strongly disagree	(n)
a) I enjoy the challenge of trying to communicate in this language	25%	52%	18%	4%	–	(554)	41%	45%	9%	3%	2%	(128)	38%	50%	–	13%	–	(8)
b) I haven't got much talent for learning this language	1%	7%	27%	51%	14%	(555)	2%	11%	21%	47%	19%	(128)	13%	13%	–	50%	25%	(8)
c) I work hard at learning this language	21%	48%	25%	5%	1%	(553)	30%	50%	16%	5%	–	(125)	43%	29%	14%	14%	–	(7)
d) I feel confident when asked to speak this language in class	8%	31%	32%	25%	3%	(555)	8%	39%	28%	20%	6%	(128)	25%	–	50%	13%	13%	(8)
e) When trying to communicate in this language, I'm prepared to make mistakes	17%	63%	16%	4%	1%	(555)	22%	55%	16%	6%	2%	(128)	38%	38%	25%	–	–	(8)
f) I enjoy listening to native speakers talking in this language	19%	44%	26%	10%	1%	(556)	34%	47%	11%	6%	3%	(128)	38%	50%	–	–	13%	(8)
g) I practise this language when I'm on my own	10%	39%	24%	21%	6%	(550)	14%	34%	25%	21%	6%	(127)	–	38%	25%	13%	25%	(8)
h) Listening to the teacher speak this language makes me feel anxious	3%	14%	21%	44%	19%	(556)	3%	7%	18%	47%	24%	(127)	14%	–	29%	41%	14%	(7)
i) I sometimes read books, magazines or newspapers in this language in my spare time	3%	17%	19%	43%	19%	(556)	2%	23%	18%	38%	19%	(128)	–	13%	13%	63%	13%	(8)
j) I sometimes watch films, videos or TV programmes in this language in my spare time	5%	22%	17%	38%	18%	(556)	6%	20%	18%	35%	20%	(128)	–	38%	25%	13%	25%	(8)
k) I sometimes read and write letters, faxes or e-mail messages in this language in my spare time	6%	17%	12%	40%	24%	(555)	9%	22%	13%	34%	21%	(128)	–	–	38%	50%	13%	(8)

SECTION C: LANGUAGES FROM P6 TO S4

Q16. Did you study any modern languages at primary school?

Please tick the appropriate box.

Yes 36% *Please go to Question 17* No 64% *Please go to Question 18* (n=1321)

Q17. Did you enjoy learning a language in primary school? Other people your age made these comments about their experiences. Do you agree with them?

Please circle the number which most closely represents your view in each case.

	Please write the name of the language you studied in primary school here: French 52%, German 17%, Italian 8%, Spanish 8%, Gaelic 1%, 2 or more languages 1%, other 1%, no language specified 12% (n=478)					
	strongly agree	agree	neutral	disagree	strongly disagree	(n)
a) Learning this language in primary school was fun	33%	47%	11%	7%	2%	(473)
b) I learnt a lot	10%	32%	28%	25%	5%	(473)
c) It helped me with languages when I started secondary school	21%	39%	17%	17%	6%	(473)
d) We spent too much time on it	1%	2%	15%	58%	24%	(473)
e) It was confusing	3%	12%	23%	48%	14%	(473)

Q18. Did you enjoy learning a language (or languages) in S1 and S2? Here are some more comments from other people your age. What do you think?

Please circle the number which most closely represents your view in each case

Please write the name(s) of the language(s) you took in the spaces	Language 1 French 72% German 24% Spanish 4% Italian 1% (n=1282)						Language 2 German 59% French 28% Spanish 7% Italian 5% (n=314)					
	(n)	strongly agree	agree	neutral	disagree	strongly disagree	(n)	strongly agree	agree	neutral	disagree	strongly disagree
a) I learnt a lot	(1281)	19%	50%	19%	10%	2%	(312)	18%	40%	22%	14%	6%
b) It was boring	(1281)	7%	19%	26%	37%	11%	(312)	11%	21%	19%	34%	16%
c) It was good preparation for Standard Grade	(1280)	16%	53%	17%	11%	3%	(294)	9%	32%	36%	14%	9%
d) The teaching methods didn't suit me	(1280)	5%	14%	27%	45%	10%	(310)	8%	16%	24%	42%	11%
e) The course book/ materials were interesting	(1277)	3%	29%	33%	26%	8%	(308)	4%	31%	32%	24%	10%
f) The pace was too slow	(1278)	6%	17%	32%	41%	4%	(311)	4%	16%	28%	45%	6%
g) The course book/ materials were well-organised for study and revision	(1278)	4%	30%	37%	24%	6%	(308)	5%	32%	37%	22%	5%
h) There was too much grammar	(1278)	8%	17%	24%	36%	16%	(311)	12%	14%	24%	33%	17%

Q19. Were you able to choose the language(s) you wanted to study in S3 and S4?

Please tick the appropriate box

(n=1320) Yes 76% No 24%

Please say why you were not able to choose the language(s) you wanted.

(n=307)

- (Had to continue with language taught in S1/2 - 30% *
- (Preferred language was not available - 27%
- (A particular language was compulsory - 27%
- (School did not offer a choice - 15%
- (Classes full for preferred language - 1%
- (Timetable problems - 4%
- (Had to continue with language taught at primary school - 2%
- (Marks were not good enough to allow choice - 1%

* Please note that the percentages in this table do not add up to 100 as students could give more than one explanation

Q20. Who gave you advice about subject choices for S3 and S4?

Please tick the appropriate box(es) below.

(n=1323)

Subject teachers	66%	Guidance teachers	61%
Careers teachers	24%	Family	72%

Other *Please say who.* (n=117)

friends	55%
own choice	27%
senior school staff	5%
professionals	4%
school publications/ computer programmes	4%
university staff / publications	3%
school staff	2%
careers office	2%

* Please note that the percentages in this table do not add up to 100 as students could give more than one explanation

Q21. When you were making choices for S3 and S4 did you feel that you were given the information you needed about modern languages by the people who advised you?

Please tick the appropriate box.

(n=1281) Yes 63%

Please say what you found particularly helpful.

(n=583)

Information on the course	60%
Information from the school	29%
General benefits of languages	12%
Relevance of languages to employment	8%
Positive attitude of school to language learning	3%
Relevance of languages to education	2%
Advice from friends and family	2%
Advice from pupils who had done the course	1%

* please note that the percentages in this table do not add up to 100 as students could give more than one explanation

No 37%

Please say what information you would have liked.

(n=388)

Information on the course	72%
General information on the subject	25%
Relevance of languages to employment	11%
Relevance of languages to education	2%

* please note that the percentages in this table do not add up to 100 as students could give more than one explanation

Q22. Did you enjoy learning a language (or languages) in S3 and S4? Do you agree with these comments?

Please circle the number which most closely represents your view in each case.

Please write the name(s) of the language(s) you take in the spaces	Language 1 French 69% Spanish 4% German 25% Italian 2% (n=1314)						Language 2 French 30% Spanish 16% German 42% Italian 12% (n=236)						Language 3 Russian 50% German 50% (n=2)					
	strongly agree	agree	neutral	disagree	strongly disagree	(n)	strongly agree	agree	neutral	disagree	strongly disagree	(n)	strongly agree	agree	neutral	disagree	strongly disagree	(n)
a) The teaching methods suited me	8%	44%	27%	16%	5%	(1313)	15%	49%	23%	9%	5%	(236)	–	50%	–	50%	–	(2)
b) The course book/ materials were boring	10%	31%	30%	26%	3%	(1314)	8%	14%	32%	39%	6%	(235)	–	50%	–	–	50%	(2)
c) The pace was about right	7%	53%	22%	16%	3%	(1315)	9%	53%	20%	14%	4%	(236)	–	50%	–	–	50%	(2)
d) There was too little grammar	10%	16%	20%	40%	13%	(1315)	14%	20%	21%	34%	11%	(236)		50%	–	–	50%	(2)
e) The course book/ materials were well organised for study and revision	5%	32%	35%	23%	6%	(1313)	6%	43%	33%	15%	3%	(235)	–	–	50%	50%	–	(2)
f) Standard Grade assessments were about right for what I have learnt	12%	62%	17%	9%	2%	(1312)	15%	60%	17%	7%	1%	(235)	–	50%	50%	–	–	(2)
g) I worked very hard at this language in S3 and S4	15%	34%	24%	20%	7%	(1311)	21%	45%	23%	9%	3%	(235)	–	–	–	100%	–	(2)
h) There was too much emphasis on speaking in S3 and S4	4%	11%	24%	49%	13%	(1314)	3%	9%	18%	55%	15%	(235)	–	–	50%	–	50%	(2)
i) Standard Grade did not cover what is needed for real communication	13%	28%	25%	29%	5%	(1314)	10%	22%	26%	33%	9%	(236)	–	50%	–	50%	–	(2)
j) I feel confident about communicating with speakers of the language	5%	20%	28%	32%	15%	(1314)	8%	27%	29%	28%	8%	(236)	–	–50%	50%	–	(2)	

Q23. What do you intend to do after this school year?

(n=1319)		
Stay on to S6	83%	*Please go to Question 24*
Leave and get a job	3%	
Go to a Further Education College	6%	
Go to University	6%	
Something else	1%	

FE College
What do you intend to study?

(n=69)	
Business, management	16%
Arts	9%
Childcare	9%
Performing arts	9%
Tourism	9%
Design	9%
Health studies	6%
Catering	4%
Sports and leisure	4%
Agriculture	4%
IT	4%
Engineering	3%

Something Else
What do you intend to do?

(n=2)	
Skill seekers course	50%
Year out to travel	50%

What kind of job are you looking for?

(n=27)	
Apprentice, trade	44%
Armed / emergency forces	22%
Nursery nurse, child care, carer	19%
Office work	11%

University
What do you intend to study?

(n=77)	
Sciences, technology, engineering	29%
Business	12%
Arts	12%
Languages	9%
Social sciences	8%
Law	7%
Education	7%
Medicine	4%
Nursing	4%
Hospitality	3%

Q24. Will you study languages in S6? (n=1086)

	Please tick the appropriate box
Yes I intend to take one or more Highers in modern languages	14%
Yes I intend to take one or more module courses in modern languages	11%
Yes I am going to take one or more Highers and one or more module courses in modern languages	2%
Yes I am taking another course (not Highers or modules) *Please say what*	11%
No	62%

Yes I am taking another course (not Highers or Modules). *Please say what.*

(n=97)

SYS	76%
Standard Grade	7%
Higher and SYS	7%
Module and SYS	5%
A Level	1%
A Level and Module	1%
Standard Grade and Module	1%
Higher, Module and SYS	1%

Q25. What are your reasons for deciding whether or not to take modern languages in S6?
(n=1059) *Please explain your reasons briefly in the box below*

Positive 39% (n=411, the number of pupils who gave a positive reason first)	
enjoy languages	30%
useful for future employment	16%
useful for future education	12%
useful for my future in general	12%
enjoyed / did well at Higher	7%
delayed Higher until S6	6%
will take a Module to try another language	5%
to communicate with foreigners	4%
delayed language study until S6	2%
useful when abroad	2%
languages are a good subject to take at Higher	2%
useful in EU of future	1%
general benefits of languages	1%

Negative 61% (n=648, the number of pupils who gave a negative reason first)	
decided to take other subjects	25%
not useful for future employment	13%
dislike languages	17%
languages are difficult	12%
timetable problems	7%
not useful for education	7%
not useful for my future in general	6%
languages are boring	2%
did not enjoy / do well at Higher	2%
languages are a bad subject to take at Higher	2%
negative attitude to teachers /teaching	2%
too much for one year	2%
heavy workload	1%
lack confidence	1%

Q26. Do you know what career would like to follow yet?

Please tick the appropriate box

(n=1315) Yes 68% *Please go to Question 27* No 33% *Please go to Question 28*

Q27. What career do you want to follow?

Please describe your intended career briefly here

(n=873)

Health	15%
Teaching	11%
Sciences	9%
Finance	6%
Armed / Emergency forces	6%
Design	5%
Media	5%
Engineering	5%
Management	5%
Business	5%
Law	5%

Job with languages:
(n=873)
4% hoped to combine languages with their choice of career.

SECTION D: IN YOUR OWN WORDS

Please tell us your views on language learning at school frankly and in your own words.

Q28 What have you enjoyed about modern languages at school?

(n=1281)

	%
nothing / not much	9
opportunities to use the language	
speaking the language	13
communicating with foreigners	16
understanding the language	3
exchange / trips abroad / penpal	6
using what has been learnt abroad	3
meeting new people on exchange	1
the pleasure of speaking another language	
speaking the language with friends	2
speaking the language with foreigners	1
cultural understanding	
learning about different countries, cultures	13
learning how people live in another country	5
learning how different people communicate	1
learning how people speak in another country	1
cultural value	
broadens horizons	3
greater appreciation of other countries	1
learning about languages	
learning how to communicate in a different language	3
relationship between languages	1
insight into structure of languages	1
learning about languages	1

Q29 What have you not enjoyed languages at school?

(n=1226)

	%
everything / most things	3
opportunities to use the language	
have not learnt enough to speak properly	4
cultural understanding	
not learning the language that is used today	2

particular aspects of language use			
speaking and conversation	7	speaking	5
learning to speak / pronounce the language	1		
writing	3	writing	6
reading	2	reading	3
particular aspects of the course			
the course has been fun	8	course was boring	7
		course is repetitive	2
		course is badly structured	2
		course is irrelevant	2
		course is rushed	2
activities were enjoyable	1		
the course has been beneficial	1		
topics were interesting	1	topics were boring	1
learning vocabulary	1	learning vocabulary	4
learning useful phrases	1	lack of time to learn vocabulary	1
		vocabulary is difficult	1
		vocabulary is boring	1
listening to the language / listening tests	2	listening tests are difficult	6
speaking tests	1	speaking / speaking tests are difficult	1
class discussion	1	speaking in front of class	2
		speaking at Higher	1
		self consciousness during speaking tests	1
		not enough speaking	1
grammar	1	grammar	18
		grammar is confusing and difficult	5
		too much grammar	5
		grammar is boring	2
		learning verbs	5
		learning tenses	2
		verbs / tenses are difficult	1
		amount of writing	1
		writing tests are difficult	1
games	1		
dialogues and role play	1		
		amount of homework	3
		exams and tests	3
		revising for tests and exams	1

a sense of progression			
gaining confidence	1		
getting better at languages	2	not doing well	1
a sense of achievement			
learning a new language	10		
learning the language	3		
enjoyment / interest			
learning languages is interesting	7	learning languages is boring	6
languages are a different kind of subject	1		
learn something new every year	1		
responding to the challenge			
learning languages is challenging	4	languages are difficult	4
		amount of learning involved too great	3
		work is too hard	2
		too much work involved for Higher	1
		too much work involved for SG	1
		too much information to absorb	1
practical value			
a useful skill	5		
languages allow you to travel	4		
past enjoyment			
liked languages in S1	2		
liked languages in S2	2		
liked course up to Standard Grade	2	Standard Grade is boring	1
		Standard Grade is slow	2
		too little work at Standard Grade	1
easiness			
not much pressure	1	pace is too slow	1
		too much pressure	1

classroom experiences			
teacher is good	4	teacher is not good	2
		dislike teacher	3
		teacher is intimidating	1
		teacher is not motivated	1
teaching methods are good	2	dislike teaching methods	5
		teaching methods are repetitive	1
		teaching methods are dull	2
		teaching methods are confused	3
foreign language assistants	2		
atmosphere, friends	2	class is too noisy / large	2
materials			
materials and books are good	1	materials are boring	1
		dislike textbooks	1
		textbooks are outdated	1
choice			
		lack of choice of language	1
		languages are compulsory	2

There has been a significant drop in the numbers of students in Scotland taking Highers in modern languages at school

Q30 **Why do you think this is?** (n=1257)	%	**Q31** **What would you do to increase numbers?** (n=1188)	%
an unattractive subject			
languages are boring	20*	make it more interesting	12*
languages are not enjoyable	10	make it more fun	12
		make it more enjoyable	5
		make it more exciting	2
		make it more appealing	3
an irrelevant subject			
many people believe languages are not important	9		
many people speak English, so languages unnecessary	9	tell students not everyone speaks English	1
languages are not useful in UK	1		
languages are a waste of time	2		
languages are irrelevant to students' daily lives	1	make it more relevant	5
languages will not be useful in later life	1	teach more useful communication	4
		put more emphasis on real communication	7
		have more exchanges/ trips abroad	11
		have more penfriend schemes	1
		use the internet to link with other countries	1

not useful for future careers / study			
languages are not useful for careers	6	make students more aware of the opportunities for linguists	7
Higher languages are irrelevant to many careers	3	interest students in careers with languages	2
		tell students languages will help them get work abroad	1
Higher languages are not an important university entrance requirement	2	tell students languages are important for university	4
		more employers/ universities should ask for Higher languages	1
demands of the subject			
languages are difficult / demanding	16	make it easier	7
grammar is difficult	1	teach more grammar	1
		teach grammar earlier	2
		teach grammar and verbs in a different way	1
too much grammar	1	spend less time on grammar	4
speaking / speaking tests is difficult	1	have more speaking	3
speaking is off-putting	1	have less speaking	1
		have less speaking tests	1
writing is difficult	1	give pupils stronger base in writing	1
too much writing	1	have less writing	1
		increase student confidence	2
		increase the length of courses	1
approach to teaching languages			
teaching methods and materials are boring	3	change teaching methods	5
teaching methods are poor or dated	4	update /improve teaching methods	4
		teach more about country and culture	2
		teach in a more enjoyable way	5
		vary teaching methods	1
		less emphasis on books	1
materials are poor	1	use modern films, videos and IT	3
		update materials	2
		make books more relevant to young people	1
		make books more interesting	2
teachers are not good	1	employ better teachers	5
teachers are unenthusiastic	1		
students dislike language teachers	1		
lack of contact with native speakers	1	use native speaking teachers	1
		use more foreign language assistants	1

problems with Standard Grade

SG course is boring	6	broaden the range of SG topics	5
do not learn enough at Standard Grade to communicate properly	1	Standard Grade should cover more	5
		have fewer tests	1
SG course is difficult	2		
SG is not enjoyable	4		
SG is enough	1		
bad marks at SG put students off	1		

problems with Higher

Higher languages are perceived to be difficult	11	make Higher easier/ more accessible	2
there is too big a gap between SG and Higher	5	make SG harder to prepare pupils for Higher	2
you need to work hard to do well in Higher mfls	2	take Higher course in sections	1
teachers make Higher languages sound difficult	1	let students know what course entails	3
Higher language is hard work / too much work	8		
too much pressure	1	slow down pace	2
Higher requires a lot of learning	1		

better information / publicity required

people think they don't need languages	2		
there is not enough emphasis on the importance of languages	2	make students understand the importance of languages	2
lack of information about languages	2	provide more information about languages	4
not enough encouragement to take languages	3	promote the subject more	6
students need to be told about the benefits of languages	3	make students understand the benefits of languages	7
		tell students languages are fun	1

better organisation required

Higher mfls clash with other subjects	2

lack of choice

there is a lack of choice of languages	2	increase choice of languages	6
people have to take languages they don't like	1	allow pupils to choose the language they want	4
		increase range of subject choices in S5/6	1
languages are compulsory	3		

other subjects are more important / useful			
other subjects are more important	7		
other subjects are more interesting / enjoyable	3		
other subjects are more relevant	2		
other subjects are easier	1		
other subjects get you further	1		
pupils are pushed into taking other subjects	1		
place of languages in the curriculum			
we start learning languages too late	1	start teaching languages earlier	8
		make languages compulsory in S5	3
classroom conditions			
		have smaller / streamed classes	1

*Please note that in these tables percentages do not add up to 100, as students could give more than one explanation in each case.

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MODERN LANGUAGES IN THE UPPER SECONDARY SCHOOL

QUESTIONNAIRE FOR PRINCIPAL TEACHERS OF MODERN LANGUAGES

Total number of Principal Teacher respondents = 103

All responses given as percentages

SECTION A: YOUR SCHOOL

1 How many pupils attend your school?

-500	14
500+	44
1000+	33
1500+	8

2 Is your school located in

... the centre of a city?	7	... the suburbs of a city?	16
... a town?	50	... a rural area?	18
		... somewhere else?	9

3 Into which of the following sectors of employment do the majority of parents of children in your school fit?

... professional/ managerial...	16	skilled/ semi-skilled	10
... agricultural	1	... manual	5
... unemployed	3	... very mixed	62

4 If you feel that the nature of the school catchment area or the local employment opportunities have any bearing on pupils' interest, level of uptake or levels of achievement in foreign languages, ***please give a brief explanation in the box below.***

langs not necessary for career	20
area of social deprivation	15
insular / parochial area	12
high local unemployment	8
langs irrelevant to many pupils	7
support for languages locally	7
prosperous area favours foreign language aspirations	5

SECTION B: ORGANISATION OF LANGUAGE TEACHING IN THE SCHOOL

5 Which languages do you yourself currently teach ?

French 93 German 62 Spanish 15 Gaelic 1 Italian 12 Russian 1

Other(s) Latin 1

6 Are you qualified to teach other languages which you are currently not teaching?

Yes 24 ***Please go to Question 7*** No 72 ***Please go to Question 8***

7 Which languages are you qualified to teach but are not teaching currently?

French 5 German 7 Spanish 3 Gaelic 0 Italian 1 Russian 4

Other(s) Portugese 2 Norwegian 2 Latin 1 English 2

8 How many language teachers are there altogether?

This data not representable

9 Which languages do they teach?

Language *Number of teachers* *FTE*

This data not representable

10 Are any other teachers qualified to teach languages which they do not currently teach?

Yes 45 ***Please go to Question 11*** No 54 ***Please go to Question 12***

11 Please indicate how many teachers are qualified to teach any of the languages below, but are currently not doing so?

Please indicate the number of teachers in the appropriate box(es)

This data not representable

12 Are you satisfied with the current range of languages on offer in your school?

Yes	72	27

13 Has the number of languages taught in the school in the last ten years ...

... increased	***Please go to question 14a***	36
... decreased	***Please go to questions 15a***	16
... remained the same?	***Please go to question 16***	48

14a If the languages taught in your school have <u>increased</u> in the last ten years, which of the following languages are new to the school?

Please tick the appropriate box(es)

French 0	German 6	Spanish 30	Gaelic 3	Italian 9	Russian 3

14b Why have you introduced new languages?

Please give a brief explanation in the box below.

increase uptake in upper school	18
take account of staff qualifications	17
widen pupils' linguistic experience	12
demand for another language	6

NOW PLEASE GO TO QUESTION 16

15a Which of the following languages are no longer taught?

Please tick the appropriate box(es)

French 0	German 10	Spanish 4	Gaelic 1	Italian 4	Russian 9

15b Why has the number of languages decreased?

Please give a brief explanation in the box below.

loss of qualified teachers	7
fall in numbers taking FLs	6
time-tabling restrictions	5

16 How is language teaching organised for S1?

All pupils in S1 study the same language *(e.g. everyone takes French)*	35
Pupils are allocated to classes taking one of the languages available	19
Pupils and/or their parents choose one of the languages available	15
Pupils take more than one language in the course of S1	12
Other system. ***Please describe in the space below.***	21

continue with primary FL	10
school allocates but parents can object	3
opportunity to take 2nd FL, but not compulsory	3

17 How are foreign language classes organised in S1?

All foreign language teaching is done in mixed ability classes	90
Setting arrangements are put into place at some point during S1	3
Other system. ***Please describe in the space below.***	7

setting on entry	2
some set, others mixed ability	2

18 How much time does an S1 pupil spend learning a foreign language, over a week?

Minutes per week for foreign language 1	-150	12
	150+	52
	170+	10
	190+	26
Minutes per week for foreign language 2 (if studied)	-60	13
	60+	3
	100+	3
	150+	1

19 Has the time allocated to foreign languages teaching in S1:

... increased in the last ten years?	**Please go to question 20**	19
... decreased in the last ten years?	**Please go to question 20**	23
... remained the same over the last ten years?	**Please go to question 21**	54

20 Why has the time allocation to foreign languages in S1 changed?

Please give a brief explanation in the box below.

decrease		increase	
make way for other subjects	10	make way for 2nd FL	6
changes to school day	8	changes in school day	5

21 How is language teaching organised for S2?

Pupils continue the language they studied in S1	48
Pupils continue the language they studied in S1 and start a second language	6
Pupils continue with the language they studied in S1 and also have 'tasters' in the other languages offered in the school	19
Pupils continue with the two languages they studied in S1	14
Pupils choose one of the languages to which they were introduced in S1	–
Other system ***Please describe in the space below.***	14

only certain pupils do 2 FL	8
opportunity for some to do 2nd FL	4

22 How are language classes organised in S2?

All foreign language teaching is done in mixed ability classes	64
A setting system is in place	14
Pupils are allocated to broad ability groupings	12
Other system. ***Please describe in the space below.***	11

top set, rest mixed	2		
setting for one language only	2	some classes set, others mixed	2
setting at some point in S2	2	some periods set, others mixed	2

23 How much time does an S2 pupil spend on language(s) over a week?

.....	minutes per week for foreign language 1	-150	18
		150+	52
		170+	9
		190+	19
.....	minutes per week for foreign language 2 (if studied)	-60	20
		60+	8
		100+	11
		150+	5

24 Has the time allocated to foreign languages teaching in S2:

... increased in the last ten years?	**Please go to question 25**	30
... decreased in the last ten years?	**Please go to question 25**	21
... remained the same over the last ten years?	**Please go to question 26a**	48

25 Why has the time allocation to foreign languages in S2 changed?

Please give a brief explanation in the box below.

decrease		*increase*	
make way for other subjects	9	to accommodate 2 FLs	18
changes to school day	5	changes in school day	8
taster courses withdrawn	3	langs. now in core	3

26a Are you satisfied with current arrangements <u>in your school</u> for teaching foreign languages in S1 and S2?

Yes 44 No 54

26b Why do you feel this way?

Please give a brief explanation in the box below.

dissatisfied		*satisfied*	
cannot set/band	24	time adequate	8
lack of time	20	continuity of primary FL	5
class size too big	7		
timetable	6		
No change of FL	6		

27 What foreign language option choices are available to pupils entering S3?

They can take one language, and ...	
... they must continue the language they have studied in S2	7
... they can choose one of the languages they have studied in S1 and S2	3
... they can choose to start a new language in place of the language(s) they have studied in S1 and S2	1
OR	
They can take one or two languages, and ...	
... both must be languages they have studied in S1 and/or S2	32
... one must be a language they have studied in S1 and/or S2 and the other can/ will be new	50
Other system.	7

Please describe in the space below.

FL2 as well as or instead of FL1 4 other variations

28 How are foreign language classes organised in S3/4?

Pupils are in broad groupings such as credit/general or general/foundation	55
A setting system is in operation across the full year group	19
All foreign language teaching is done in mixed ability classes	12
Other system. ***Please describe in the space below***	14

varies according to time-table block	8
varies according to FL and numbers	6

29 What is the <u>average</u> size of S3/S4 class for first foreign languages in your school ie. the language which pupils started in S1?

-15	2
15 - 20 pupils	15
20 - 25 pupils	41
25- 30 pupils	43

30 What would be considered to be a viable group size for a class of second foreign language beginners in S3 in your school ?

Fewer than 5 pupils	7
Fewer than 10 pupils	24
Between 10-15 pupils	47
More than 15 pupils	7

31a Are you satisfied with current arrangements in your school for option choices at the end of S2?

Yes 43 No 54

31b Why do you feel this way?

Please give a brief explanation in the box below.

dissatisfied		satisfied	
option columns/timetabling	23	pupils can do 2 FLs	18
pupils not encouraged to take FLs	7		
2 sciences and 2 FLs not compatible	5		
+ others			

32 How much time does an S3 pupil spend learning a foreign language, over a week?

Language 1		***Language 2***	
		-150	1
150+	75	150+	63
170+	12	170+	10
190+	13	190+	10

33 How much time does an S4 pupil spend learning a foreign language, over a week?

Language 1		***Language 2***	
		-150	1
150+	77	150+	63
170+	13	170+	11
190+	11	190+	10

34 Has the time allocated to foreign languages teaching in S3/S4:

... increased in the last ten years?	**Please go to question 35**	8
... decreased in the last ten years?	**Please go to question 35**	25
... remained the same over the last ten years?	**Please go to question 36a**	66

35 Why has the time allocation to foreign languages in S3/4 changed?

Please give a brief explanation in the box below.

decreased		increased	
other subjects	6	school day	6
to allow 8 Standard Grades	6		
school day	5		

36a Are you satisfied with current arrangements for teaching foreign languages in S3 and S4?

Yes 38 No 59

36b Why do you feel this way?

Please give a brief explanation in the box below.

dissatisfied		satisfied	
time allocation	27	time allocation	12
large classes	20	groupings	12
cannot group	18	pupils can do 2 FLs	7
timetabling	8		
+ others			

SECTION C : DEPARTMENTAL PERSPECTIVES

37a Do you use a commercially published course eg *Avantage, Zick Zack* as the main source of teaching materials at the following stages?

96	S1	Yes ***please go to question 37c***	No	***please go to question 37b***	3
91	S2	Yes ***please go to question 37c***	No	***please go to question 37b***	5
71	S3	Yes ***please go to question 37c***	No	***please go to question 37b***	24
65	S4	Yes ***please go to question 37c***	No	***please go to question 37b***	30
22	S5	Yes ***please go to question 37c***	No	***please go to question 37b***	63

37b If you do not use a particular commercial course at any of the stages listed above, please explain in the box below what kind of materials you use.

mixture of department and commercial	42
department materials	16
topic/module packs	18

37c Do you have to supplement the commercial courses you use on a regular basis?

Yes 96 ***Please go to Question 37d*** No 2 ***Please go to Question 38***

37d If you supplement the commercial courses you use, please indicate briefly how you do this in the box below.

in-house department materials	49
differentiated materials	25
commercial skills practice	25
other published courses	22
worksheets	16
grammar practice	15
+ others	

38 Do the majority of pupils at the stages listed below have their own text book or other source of reference for the foreign language which they can take home?

S1	Yes	52	No	47
S2	Yes	52	No	47
S3	Yes	53	No	46
S4	Yes	55	No	44
S5	Yes	71	No	24

39 Do you have any comment to make about the availability or quality of foreign language teaching materials for school learners?

Please write in the box below.

Scottish exam not catered for	29
excellent/good	26
no one course caters	17
expensive for one book per pupil	15
poor	13
lack of self-access	12
poorer for non French	10
lack of structure/progression	7

40 Below are listed a few of the strategies which Principal Teachers of Modern Languages (interviewed in the early part of this research) had implemented in their schools to benefit pupils' foreign language learning. Please indicate whether you have undertaken similar strategies in your department:

a) Putting greater emphasis on writing	82
b) Making pupils more aware of grammar	87
c) Using setting to 'stretch' the more able pupils	60
d) Developing pupils' reading skills through extended texts	53
e) Moving to more whole class teaching	75
f) Allowing teachers to teach to their strengths	39

eg in a particular language or with particular kinds of classes

41 If you have introduced other strategies to improve pupils' foreign language learning or wish to elaborate on or qualify any of the items you have ticked above, *please write in the box below.*

providing pupils in support materials	13
setting targets for pupils	6
+ very many others	

42 Are any of the following available in your school as an enhancement of pupils' foreign language experience?

a) Time with the Foreign Languages Assistant	61
b) Organised visits to the countries where the FL is spoken	67
c) Exchanges with pupils from the countries where the FL is spoken	61
d) Access to the new technologies, such as the Internet, CD Roms	51
e) Foreign language clubs	16
f) Work experience abroad	19
g) Other ***Please specify***	
varied individual ideas eg theatre visits	5

43 How successful do you think any of the above have been in increasing interest in or uptake of foreign languages in your school?

Please give a brief explanation in the below.

no discernible influence	32
exchanges revive interest	15

44 What are the key essentials of your Department's current development plan?

Please list briefly in the box below.

Higher Still	70
5-14	36
changing courses	29
MLPS	25
differentiation	21
developing individual skills	21
IT	20
+many other individual plans	

45 What would you say are the main professional development needs for teachers within your Department? (Where applicable, please distinguish between the needs of recently qualified and established teachers in the Department and your own needs as a manager.)

Please list briefly in the box below.

Higher Still	40
IT training	36
time	24
maintaining fluency	16
how to differentiate	13
more effective management of staff	12
how to motivate	10
+ others	

SECTION D: STANDARD GRADE

46 How many pupils are entered for Standard Grade exams in the following languages this year, and for what levels?

This data not representable

47a Are there any S4 pupils who will not be taking Standard Grade exams in a foreign language this year?

Yes 71 — ***Please go to questions 47b and 47c***

No 28 — ***Please go to question 48***

47b If some S4 pupils in your school will not be taking Standard Grade exams in a foreign language this year, why is this?

Please give a brief explanation in the box below.

pupils with learning difficulties	29
pupils extracted to work on basics	16
absentees	14
FL not compulsory	7
+ few others	

47c What alternative provision have you made for these pupils (such as modular language courses)?

Please describe alternative provision briefly in the box below.

none	50
modules	13

48 The following statements about the Standard Grade course are based on those made by Principal Teachers of foreign languages interviewed in the early stages of this research. *Please circle the number which most closely represents your views.*

	strongly agree	agree	neither agree nor disagree	disagree	strongly disagree
a) Topics appearing in Standard Grade reading can be unpredictable	34	46	11	8	2
b) There should be a prescribed vocabulary list for Standard Grade	42	26	15	13	3
c) There is a dearth of suitable Standard Grade textbooks	39	26	14	19	1
d) The emphasis on speaking in Standard Grade is about right	6	32	10	35	18
e) Class teaching has to be geared to specific assessment requirements	29	47	15	5	5
f) The writing element of Standard Grade should be compulsory	27	28	6	23	14
g) The use of dictionaries creates more problems than it solves for pupils at Standard Grade	21	35	19	18	4
h) The burdens of the Standard Grade exams are too much for many pupils on the day	31	30	12	24	1

49 If you have any other comments to make about the Standard Grade course or the Standard Grade examination or if you would like to qualify or elaborate on any of the items you have circled in question 48, ***please write in the box below.***

speaking should not be worth 50% 24
too many exams on same day 19
speaking has adverse effect on pupils 15
+ many other individual comments

SECTION E: HIGHER

50 How many pupils are entered for Higher exams in the following languages this year?

This data not representable

51 What would be considered to be a viable group size for a foreign language Higher class in your school?

Fewer than 5 pupils	30
Fewer than 10 pupils	40
Between 10-15 pupils	25
More than 15 pupils	3

52a Where small numbers of pupils taking a Higher foreign language are allowed, are there any conditions attached? *eg less time allocated than for other Higher subjects or combined classes with pupils taking Modules in foreign languages?*

Yes 51 — ***Please go to question 52b***

No 49 — ***Please go to question 53a***

52b Please explain what these conditions are.

Please write in the box below.

combined Higher/Module class	39
reduced lesson/teacher contact time	8

53a Do you currently restrict access to Higher foreign languages courses to pupils who meet certain criteria (e.g. a credit level pass at Standard Grade)?

Yes 84 — ***Please go to question 53b***

No 15 — ***Please go to question 54a***

53b What kinds of criteria do pupils have to meet and why is this necessary?

Please give a brief explanation in the box below.

pass at C + C writing	28
pass at C	27
General 3 - writing	16
Credit of 1/General if one 2 years	9
criteria not always adhered to	17

54a In your view what are the main reasons pupils choose to take a Foreign Language at Higher?

Please indicate whether you think each reason is

	of major importance	of some importance	not relevant
a) They enjoy languages	59	37	1
b) The successful track record of the ML department at Higher	13	38	42
c) They did well in languages at Standard Grade	71	25	4
d) They think foreign languages will be useful to them in their choice of career	27	68	1
e) They think that the Higher will be relatively easy	1	5	74
f) Their parents are keen for them to study languages	5	54	32
g) They are keen to travel or study abroad	9	68	17
h) They have a natural aptitude for foreign languages	49	43	4
i) They have outside connections with the language or the country concerned	4	52	35
j) The quality and calibre of the MLs teachers in the school	24	52	16
k) There is a tradition in the school of continuing a foreign language to Higher	6	16	68

55a What do you think are the main reasons why pupils competent to take a Higher foreign language decide not to do so?

		Please indicate whether you think each reason is		
		of major importance	of some importance	not relevant
a	They do not perceive a use for languages in their choice of career	62	31	3
b	They have heard that the Higher is very difficult to do well in	85	9	5
c	Languages are 'out of fashion' - other subjects are more attractive	40	39	17
d	Languages are seen as too 'specialised'	27	44	20
e	Timetable clashes with other subjects	49	35	11
f	They cannot fit a foreign language in because the school encourages pupils to take 4 Highers only	10	22	61
g	They have been put off by the experience of the Standard Grade course	30	54	13

55b If you would like to elaborate on or qualify any of the items you have circled above or if you think there are other reasons, ***please list them in the space below.***

level of difficulty 15
+ others

56a Have the numbers of pupils taking Higher foreign languages in your school ...

... increased in the last ten years?	21
... remained the same over the last ten years?	27
... decreased in the last ten years?	50

56b Why do you think this is?

Please give a brief explanation in the box below eg the school roll has fallen.

decreased		*increased*	
level of difficulty	31	improved reputation of department	10
other subjects considered more important	9		
effect of SG	7		
time-tabling problems	6		

57a Would you say that the levels of achievement of pupils taking foreign languages at Higher in your school have ...

	Please tick the appropriate box
... improved over the last ten years?	22
... remained the same over the last ten years?	50
... fallen in the last ten years?	23

57b Why do you think this is?

Please give a brief explanation in the box below.

improved		*fallen*	
SQA awards more A/Bs	7	poorer candidates	8
ML department	10	not always best pupils	5
more emphasis on grammar and writing	7	reduced pupils motivation	6
calibre of pupils	11	course too demanding	4
dedicated pupils	5		
quality of teaching staff	8		

58a The following statements about the Higher course or examination are based on those made by Principal Teachers of foreign languages interviewed in the early stages of this research.

	strongly agree	agree	neither agree nor disagree	disagree	strongly disagree
a) There is excessive emphasis on grammar and writing skills	8	21	21	37	8
b) There should be continuous assessment as well as an exam	10	34	17	25	10
c) The Higher course as it stands needs two years rather than one	26	31	18	21	-
d) The revised Higher is more difficult than the traditional Higher	12	17	20	35	12
e) The gap between Standard Grade and Higher is too great for pupils to achieve comparable success with other subjects	66	22	4	7	1
f) The current Higher exam is a marathon which puts pupils off	43	27	12	15	1

58b If you have any other comments to make about the Higher course or the higher examination or if you wish to elaborate on or qualify anything you have circled above, ***please write them in the box below.***

SG inadequate preparation for H	8
SG and H don't articulate	4
not enough writing and grammar at SG	4
+ many different individual comments	

SECTION F: NATIONAL POLICIES

Languages for All

59 How important do you personally think it is that all pupils should study a foreign language to the end of S4?

Very important	34
Quite important	25
Not important	39

60a Have your views on this changed at all since the introduction of the *Languages for All* policy?

Yes 37 — ***Please go to question 60b***

No 62 — ***Please go to question 61***

60b How and why have your views changed?

Please give a brief explanation in the box below.

not suitable for SLD/SEN pupils	13
problems of motivation	9
4 years enough for many pupils	7
some find it difficult	6
+ others	

61a Do you believe that foreign language learning of some kind should be a compulsory part of the curriculum of all S5 pupils?

Yes 23 No 78

61b Why do you hold this view?

Please give a brief explanation in the box below.

	against	*for*	
some pupils not capable	26	Europe	9
compulsion puts pupils off	22	cultural	5
would cause problems	8	essential skill	7

Higher Still

62a What kind of impact do you think *Higher Still* will have on the way in which foreign languages are offered or taught in your school?

Positive 32 Negative 16 Neutral 49

62b What changes will *Higher Still* bring about in your school?

Please give a brief explanation in the box below.

unknown	23	more appropriate course	18
bi/multi-level teaching	28	will increase numbers	14
more assessment procedures	9		
+ others			

Modern Languages in the Primary School

63a Do the majority of your pupils come into S1 having begun foreign language learning in primary?

Yes	68	***Please go to question 63b***
Will do so in the next session	18	***Please go to question 63c***
No	13	***Please go to question 64***

63b Have you experienced any of the following as a result of the MLPS initiative in you school cluster?

1)	Reluctance on the part of the school management to alter S1 class arrangements to enable the ML department to build on the language started in primary	12
2)	Greater enthusiasm among S1 pupils for their foreign language learning	43
3)	Changes to the school's policy on diversification of foreign languages	17
4)	Earlier demotivation on the part of some pupils in their foreign language learning in secondary	31
5)	Pressure from parents to introduce or continue a particular foreign language in S1	13
6)	Increased interest among pupils to take up a second foreign language in S3	3

63c If you have any comments to make about the impact of MLPS in your school or cluster, ***please write in the box below.***

diversification lost	7	get through S1 course more quickly	5
imbalance between languages	6		
problem due to mixed entry	5		
uncertain of future	5		

plus many more (mostly negative) comments

SECTION G: OTHER FACTORS

64 To what extent do you feel the following groups see foreign language learning as an important element in young people's education?

Please circle the appropriate symbol below to say whether you think they see modern language as

	very important	quite important	not important at all
Parents	10	67	16
Local authorities	11	55	22
National government	21	58	15
Senior management staff in your school	13	65	17
Higher education institutions	4	60	25
Employers	2	51	35
Young people themselves	1	43	50
Guidance and career staff in your school	1	57	35
The media	4	48	34
Other influential group(s) ***Please state***			

65 What do you feel is the main purpose of learning modern languages in school?

Please give a brief explanation in the box below.

expand horizons/knowledge of other countries	62
communication in FL	47
for education/career in Europe and home	23
language learning later/own language	17
promote European identity/less insular	17
develop social skills	12
for enjoyment	11

66 Is there anything else you would like to add about factors affecting the national decline in uptake at Higher in foreign languages?

Please do so briefly in the box below.

level of difficulty of H	21	should be promoted by government	6
pupils don't see relevance	12		
poor articulation SG-H	9		
unpredictability of H	7		
pupils put off by SG	6		
sense of lack of achievement at SG	5		

Thank you for completing this questionnaire.
Please return it in the envelope provided b y **12 March 1998**

HEADTEACHER SURVEY RESPONSES

54 respondents

Findings are given as percentages.

1. Reasons for student choices

(a) Why do you think students in your school CHOOSE to study a Modern Language at Higher?

	%
career/employment prospects	63
enjoyment of languages	43
for Higher education purposes	33
natural aptitude	24
success at Standard Grade	22
good teaching/staff	20

(b) Why do you think they CHOOSE NOT to study a Modern Language at Higher?

	%
(perceived) difficulty of Higher	54
prefer/need other subjects	41
not relevant to their needs	26
experience of Standard Grade	26
teaching methods/content S1-S4	13

(c) Have you noted any differences in student preference for one language or another? If so, to what do you attribute these differences?

	%
No/not applicable	30
preference for French	22
(main FL from S1/parental preference/historical)	
preference for Spanish	7
preference for German	2

2. Promotion of Modern Languages

What strategies have been used in the school to promote modern languages? How successful have these been?

	%		%
offer range of languages	31	very successful	5
exchanges/trips	30	reasonable success	11
MLPS	13	limited success	13
liaison with primary	11		
good department	11		
clubs	9		
upgrading rooms/courses	7		
changes to option choice form	7		

3. Policy priorities within the school

(a) Does your school have any policy priorities concerning Modern Languages, particularly in relation to uptake at Higher, and to the introduction of Higher Still? What are these?

	%
No/none	61

(b) Has there been any particular impact on modern languages as a result of individual school policies (such as encouraging pupils to take four rather than five Highers)?

	%
No/none	67
Yes/some	1

(c) Does the school have a policy on the number of pupils needed to make a Higher class viable? How has Modern Languages teaching been affected by this?

	%
No	48 (so Higher class has not run: 11%)
Yes	41 (but waived regularly for modern languages: 13%)
Combined Higher/Module classes	17

4. Value and relevance of Modern Languages
Do you think it is important for students to study Modern Languages at school? Why do you think this?

	%		%
Yes	94	No/ Not for all pupils	6
because of			
Europe	41		
future employment prospects	39		
cultural understanding	33		
intrinsic value	22		

5. Increasing uptake in your school
Do you wish to increase uptake in your school? If so, what plans have you made to do this?

	%		%
Yes	32	No	4
review of teaching and learning first	13	No plans at present	6
restructuring option choice form	7	Reservations	6
modules in S5/S6	7		
extra teaching period in S4 for Credit	4		

6. Effects of national policy on Modern Languages.
How have the following policies influenced Modern Languages at your school?

a) *Modern Languages at Primary School*

	%
positive comment	24
negative comment	24
mixed response	9
effects on diversification	15

b) *'Languages for All to age 16'*

	%	
positive comment	11	
negative comment	33	(adverse effects on uptake: 13%)
mixed response	7	

c) *Diversification of Modern Languages*

	%
beneficial	13
problematic	24

d) *The present Standard Grade and Revised Higher examinations*

Standard Grade	%	*Higher*	%	*Standard Grade/Higher articulation*	%
positive comment	6	positive comment	2	positive comment	0
negative comment	32	negative comment	15	negative comment	17

7. Higher Still
What are the potential effects of Higher Still on Modern Language teaching in your school?

	%		%
positive effect	20	negative effect	19
more bi-level teaching	24		
more (complex) assessment	7		

8. Guidance
What information about the future educational and career value of Modern Languages is provided for students in your school when making subject choices at Higher?

Only 5 examples of practice outside 'normal' arrangements.

9. Local influences
Are there groups within your area,- e.g. parents, local businesses, your Education Authority - with strong views on the teaching of Modern Languages? Have these influenced provision in your school?

	%
supportive Local Authority	9
supportive parents	6

10. Increasing uptake locally and nationally
What steps should be taken by your Education Authority to increase uptake of Modern Languages at Higher? And what steps should be taken nationally?

	%
Local Authority	
reinstate/increase foreign language assistants	9
staffing levels/reduce class sizes	7
National Level	
review of Standard Grade and/or Higher examinations	26
expand MLPS to younger pupils	13
campaign to promote value of FLs	7

11. Anything else?
Is there anything else you would like to add about Modern Languages provision, practice and uptake?

no pattern of responses

PARENT INTERVIEW RESPONSES

Answers in percentages

55 responses

Are you

1 male **25** female **75**

1b Which school does your son/daughter attend?

Responses from parents from 10 of 12 case-study schools.

1c Is your child

in S5 this year **44** or last year **51**

1d Is this child

male **38** female **62**

SECTION A : PARENTS' OWN LANGUAGE EXPERIENCE

2a Is English your mother tongue/first language?

yes **98** no **2**

2b Have you ever learned any language other than English?

yes **95** no **5** → *go to Section B*

2c Which language(s) do you speak/know?

French	85
German	20
Italian	5
Spanish	7
Gaelic	—

other *(please add below)*

Latin **7** Norwegian **2** Russian **2**

2d How fluent would you say you were in that language?

bilingual/native speaker	2
very fluent	4
quite fluent	18
'get by'	53
not at all	29

3a Where do you use your second/foreign language(s)?

in the home	4
at work	18
on holiday	54
with family or friends	9
on business	5

3b How often do you use your other language(s)

every day	4
frequently	13
sometimes	11
annual holiday	29
hardly ever/never	36

4a Where did you learn your second/foreign language(s)?

at school	89
in the home	5
abroad	5
evening classes	4

4b (If a foreign language was learned at school) For how many years did you learn a language at school?

2 years or less	15
4 years or less	33
5 years or more	54

5a Do you have any qualifications in another language?

yes 42 no 58

5b If yes, what qualification(s) do you have?

higher degree + language(s)	7
Higher Grade + language(s)	15
O Grade + language (s)	18
Standard Grade + language (s)	2
other + language (s)	—

SECTION B: CHILD'S EXPERIENCE OF FOREIGN LANGUAGE LEARNING

6a Has your child any experience of a foreign language outside of school?

yes **76** no **24** → *go to 7a*

6b If yes, please explain briefly how he/she has gained this experience

school exchange	**9**
school visit/trip	**9**
family holidays	**45**
staying with relatives/friends abroad	**4**
contact with relatives/friends abroad	**7**

7a Which language(s) has your child learned in school?

French	**84**
German	**36**
Italian	**5**
Spanish	**5**
Latin	**2**
Gaelic	—

7b Which language(s) did your child take at Standard Grade?

French	**82**
German	**33**
Italian	**2**
Spanish	**4**
Latin	**2**
Gaelic	—
None	**2**

8a At the time of your child's option choices for S3, were you happy with the fact that your child would continue with one foreign language up to Standard Grade?

yes **96** no — mixed feelings **4**

8b Why were you happy or unhappy about this?

Happy because:		*Unhappy because:*	
important for future employment	**33**	not important for chosen career	—
important to understand other cultures	**42**	missed out on other subject	—
will be of use later	**29**	not necessary (all speak English)	—
matter of principle	**11**	wanted child to do 2 languages	—
child good at languages	**7**	child poor at languages	—
child enjoyed languages	**9**	child did not enjoy languages	—
		way child was taught	**4**

9a Do you feel that your own child benefited from learning a foreign language up to Standard Grade?

yes **87** no **7** unsure **7**

9b Why do you think this?

yes because:		*no because:*	
child got a good grade	**16**	child got a poor grade	—
child enjoyed the course	**29**	child did not enjoy the course	**9**
good teaching	**7**	poor teaching	**2**
increased motivation/confidence	**15**	demotivating/lowered confidence	—
acquired good competence in FL	**24**	made little progress in FL	**2**
can use FL well in country	**4**	class did not get on with teacher	**2**
future relevance/no barriers	**2**		

9c How well would you say your child speaks the foreign language he/she learned at Standard Grade?

fluently	**24**
quite fluently	**29**
basic communication	**25**
can cope in limited situations	**13**
better than parent	—
not as well as parent	**4**
not at all	**7**
don't know	**4**

10a Did your child opt to do one or more foreign languages at Higher in S5 or S6?

yes **55** no **45** → *go to 10c*

10b If yes, which language(s) did they choose?

French	**42**)	
German	**20**)	
Italian	—)	*go to 11a*
Spanish	—)	
Latin	—)	
Gaelic	—)	

10c If no, did your child continue with a foreign language or start a new one as part of a non-Higher course, such as a Module or taster course?

yes **9** no —

11a Why did your son/daughter opt (not) to do a foreign language at Higher?

taking Higher FL		*not taking Higher FL*	
good at FL	**18**	not good at FL	**2**
enjoys FL/enjoyed at SG	**31**	does not enjoy FL/did not like it at SG	**9**
good result at Standard Grade	**9**	poor result at Standard Grade	—
needed for chosen career	**5**	not needed for chosen career	**2**
needed for chosen HE course	**4**	not needed for chosen HE course	**7**
interested in the FL culture	—	preferred other subjects	**24**
keen to travel	—	needed other subjects	**16**
liked teachers/good teachers	**4**	disliked teachers	**5**
wanted challenge	—	FL too hard at Higher	**4**
peer pressure/influence	**4**	peer pressure/influence	**4**
advice from guidance	—	advice from guidance	—
couldn't fit in other subjects	**2**	couldn't fit it in/options	**9**
parental influence	**2**	not a fashionable subject	**2**
thought it would be easy	**2**	reaction to older sibling who did FIs	**2**
didn't like other subjects	**2**		

12a Were you happy with your child's decision (not) to take a foreign language at Higher?

yes **75** no **24** don't know — **2** no reply

12b Why was that the case?

SECTION C : NATIONAL POLICY FOR FOREIGN LANGUAGES

13 a Were you aware that it is national educational policy that all Scottish pupils continue with the study of a foreign language up to the end of S4?

yes **76** no **24**

13b How important do you think it is that all pupils study a foreign language up to the end of S4?

very important **76**
quite important **13**
not important **11**

13c Why do you think this?

important because:		*not important because :*	
helps to get a job	**15**	not needed for employment	—
will increase mobility in Europe	**44**	everybody speaks English in business	—
useful for holidays and visits	**18**	everybody speaks English in tourist places	—
understanding other cultures	**35**	youth culture is English-oriented	—
overcomes insularity/parochialism	**45**	all foreigners interested in our culture	—
understanding other languages	**5**	some pupil's hate it/not interested	**5**
for communication	**5**	some pupils need more on basics	**2**
broaden intellect	**2**		

14a Do you think that the learning of a foreign language should be compulsory for all pupils staying on at school in S5/S6?

yes **38** no **58** don't know **4**

14b Why do you think this?

yes because:		*no because:*	
helps to get a job	**15**	not needed for employment	—
will increase mobility in Europe	**22**	everybody speaks English in business	—
useful for holidays and visits	**11**	everybody speaks English in tourist places	—
understanding other cultures	**15**	youth culture is English-oriented	—
overcomes insularity/parochialism	**18**	other subjects are more important	**9**
		not needed to get into HE	—
		some would find it too difficult	**13**
		freedom of choice important	**18**

15a Were you aware that nationally, the number of pupils taking a Higher in a foreign language has been declining steadily over the past decade?

yes **42** no **60**

15b Can you suggest any reasons for this decline?

16a Do you think that this decline is something which government, education authorities, parents, employers or other groups should be concerned about?

yes **95** no **4**

16b If yes, what do you think could be done to improve this situation?
If no, why not?

LANGUAGES AND EMPLOYMENT: TELEPHONE INTERVIEW SURVEY

9 respondents

Types of industry/ employment represented

- chamber of commerce 2
- textiles 1
- fishing 1
- conference organiser 1
- tourism 1
- accountancy 1
- exporters' agency 1
- computer call centre 1

1. The value of language skills in the workplace

How important do employers believe it to be for employees to have at least some knowledge of a foreign language?

- essential 5
  for anyone working in export/tourism/international conferences
  English is spoken by 1/16 of my clients

- essential for some 2
  depends on type of company
  depends on position within company

- not essential 2
  for industries which do not export to Europe
  exporters' club survey found that languages was bottom of the list of skills sought by employers

How important do employers believe it to be for employees to be highly competent or have a near native command of a foreign language?

- very important 2
  need to have lived in the country in which the language is spoken for at least 9 months

- quite important 3
  depends on position within company

- not important 4
  specific services such as translation can be bought when required

How highly do employers value foreign language skills (e.g. ability to converse or conduct business in a foreign language, ability to translate documents) in employees?

- very highly 5
  written skills in particular
  to communicate with foreign clients
  to research markets
  to visit tradeshows, exhibitions, etc.
  for answering the telephone
  but no premium (in terms of higher salary) put on this skill
- to some degree 1
- not at all 3
  companies buy in the language skills they need
  everyone speaks English

How likely are employers to make use of the language ability and skills of their employees?

- very likely 3
  it would be an enormous disadvantage not to speak other languages in this company
- to some degree 4
  employees with such skills will be encouraged to work in areas where these skills can be used
  likely in exporting, but not in other aspects of industry
  useful in an emergency, but for planned work, skills bought in from outside
- unlikely 2
  unlikely to be used except in companies exporting to Europe
  unlikely to be used, but if requested, expectations of standards of communication are unrealistically high

Are languages a skill which employers seek in prospective employees?

- Yes 6
  for some jobs
- No 3

How likely are employers to develop language skills in their employees?

- very likely 1
- to some degree 2
  employees have been sent on courses
  language courses sometimes offered as an incentive
- unlikely 6
  employer only recruits native speakers for jobs which require language skills
  it takes a long time to learn a language well; there is no point in knowing a little
  employees are welcome to learn languages in their own time
  although language skills are essential in this job, employers expect employees to maintain and develop these independently
  company believes schools/universities should be doing more in this area - not their responsibility

2. The importance of language skills in school leavers

What value do employers place on a Higher modern language compared to other Highers?*

- higher than other subjects 0
- the same as other Highers 2
  is an indicator of overall educational ability
  a Higher in a modern language indicates a good understanding of English grammar, unlike a Higher in English
- not high 6
  employ only graduates, what they did at Higher is not important
  the Higher only teaches students to read and write, they cannot speak fluently
  Higher is too academic - does not teach the skills which business needs
  Higher is not high enough, even universities are not producing the skilled linguists needed for this job (so they employ native speakers)

*One respondent did not answer this question.

Is a Higher language perceived to be more/less important than a Higher in science of in professional subjects such as accounting or management and information studies?*

- more important 0
- the same 2
  variety is important
- less important 6
  certain jobs require particular technical or professional skills
  modern language an indicator of educational ability rather than a specific requirement
  the level of language skill acquired by students with Higher modern languages is not high enough to render this a useful qualification

*One respondent did not answer this question

Would you agree with S5 students who believe that 'a language impresses employers'?

- Yes 5
  indicates developed communication skills/ overall educational ability
- No 4

Would you agree with the notion held by many students that 'a language helps you to get a good job'?

- Yes 5
  if at degree level, not at Higher
  if linguists 'sell' their languages skills to potential employers, in the context of other skills (e.g. marketing)
- No 4
  valuable only in conjunction with other relevant subjects, not on its own

3. The most useful languages and language skills in the workplace

Which languages do employers find most useful?*

- French 7
- German 6
- Spanish 3
- Italian 2
- Russian 2
- Scandinavian languages 2
- Japanese 2
- Chinese (Mandarin) 1
- Dutch 1

Scotland would be at an advantage if Dutch was taught in at least one university; currently not available anywhere in the UK

*Note that these responses add up to more than 9, as respondents mentioned more than one language.

Are employers interested in the European languages commonly taught in Scottish schools or would other languages be more useful?

European languages most useful 9

but Russian/other Eastern bloc languages/Chinese/Turkish/Greek would be useful as new markets in these areas are opening up
Russian of particular value in the fishing industry
Scandinavian countries do not expect others to speak their languages
Japanese sometimes needed

What level of competence are most employers interested in?*

	speaking/listening	reading	writing
• basic	4	1	2
• fluent	2	2	2
• near native	2	2	2

*Note that these responses add up to more than 9, as respondents mentioned competence in more than one area.

What types of skills are most useful?*

- speaking 8
- translating 3
- writing 2

but outside translators often employed for this
particularly at level of communicating by e-mail/fax - this is becoming increasingly important

generally, an ability to work well with people from different countries/cultures - this is more than simply knowing the language

*Note that these responses add up to more than 9, as respondents mentioned more than one type of skill.

Appendix C

Outcomes of language-teaching programmes: an example

Below we set out the outcomes of two types of language-teaching programme of the Carleton Board of Education, Ontario, Canada. The context in Canada is of course very different from that of Scotland, and the two programmes are forms of 'immersion' which is not implemented at present in Scotland for Modern Languages, though it of course is for Scottish Gaelic.

Carleton Board of Education, Ontario, Canada

Early French Immersion (EFI)

Kindergarten is the normal point of entry for EFI. Students are taught in French 100% of the time in kindergarten and Grade 1. With the introduction of English in Grade 2, the French portion drops to 80% and gradually diminishes to 50% in Grades 7-9.

Outcomes:

By Grade 10 students:

- would be able to take further education with French as the language of instruction, at the college or university level, understanding lectures, writing papers, and participating in class discussions;
- could live in a French community after a short orientation period;
- would be able to participate easily in conversation;
- would have absorbed information about the culture, society, customs, economy, government and institutions of a French-speaking community;
- could understand and appreciate the values held by members of the French-speaking community.

Late French Immersion (LFI)

This starts the intensive use of French for instruction in Grade 7 and builds on the solid base developed through the Core French programme from kindergarten to Grade 6. French makes up approximately 70% of the program in Grades 7 and 8, and 50% in Grade 9.

Outcomes:

After competing the LFI program students:

- would be able to read newspapers and books of interest with occasional help from a dictionary;
- would be able to understand radio and television news and other programs of interest;
- could participate adequately in conversation;
- would have absorbed information about culture, society, customs, economy, government and institutions of a French-speaking community;
- would be able to function quite well in a French community after a few months of residence.

What we consider to be of relevance here is the very clear way in which the Board of Education explains the outcomes of these two programmes for the benefit of parents and the public. The explanations are given, not in specialist technical terms, but rather in everyday language related to activities that non-specialists can readily understand.

We have seen no evidence of the outcomes of Scottish Modern Languages programmes being stated with comparable clarity. In Scotland, under present curricular arrangements, the outcomes would have to be much more modest, even with the best students, in view of the much more limited amounts of time made available for language-learning and use. However, as indicated elsewhere in our report, other countries in Europe, including in England, are making progress with what in the Carleton Board is termed Late French Immersion, and we see no reason for thinking that Scottish students on LFI programmes would not be able to achieve outcomes comparable to those given here.

The Scottish Council for Research in Education

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